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Paris distances itself from Mitterrand's call for EU meeting on crisis in Algeria

PARIS (R) — Interior Minister Charles Pasqua put distance on Sunday between the French government and President Francois Mitterrand over the head of state's controversial proposal for a European-sponsored peace conference for Algeria.

"You put me in a difficult situation because it's the president of the republic," Mr. Pasqua said during a television interview when asked about Mr. Mitterrand's proposal.

"I am a member of his government and at the same time I am not certain that we were a partner in this move," Mr. Pasqua said on Luxembourg television's Grand Jury Public Affairs show.

France's centre-right government "cohabits" with Socialist Mitterrand.

Relations between Algeria and France, its former colonial master, were thrown into crisis over Mr. Mitterrand's suggestion that a platform drafted by Algerian opposition groups in Rome last month could serve as the basis for a European Union (EU) conference on Algeria.

Algeria on Saturday recalled its ambassador to France and called in the French ambassador in Algiers to question him on Mr. Mitterrand's proposal.

Algerian state radio called the plan "interference" generated by what it called Mr. Mitterrand's hatred of Algerian independence, achieved from France in 1962 after a savage eight-year war.

The country has been torn by civil strife since 1992, when the military-backed authorities cancelled elections the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win.

An estimated 30,000 people have died in the struggle between authorities and Muslim militants battling to overthrow them.

French cabinet members had previously praised the ROME opposition platform, but government policy has been to let the Algerians settle their own disputes.

The hard-line Pasqua said it was the French government that had "sensitised" its European allies to the problem of extremism and said European experts were meeting this week in Paris to discuss the issue.

Mr. Pasqua ordered police raids and widespread identity checks across France last summer after fundamentalists shot dead five French officials in an embassy housing compound in Algiers.

More than 20 suspected activists were detained and later deported to the West African nation of Burkina Faso.

He also accused Germany and the United States of tolerating extremist fundamentalist activities within their borders.

"Each time that it has been necessary, the (French) police have intervened," he told Luxembourg television, stating that 500 people linked to fundamentalism had been arrested and 250 of these referred to the justice system.

"I can tell you today that we remain vigilant and that each time it becomes necessary we will carry out arrests and expulsions," he said.

More threats

An official of Algeria's former ruling party was found decapitated, security forces said Sunday as radical Islamic

extremists took responsibility for last week's deadly car bombing and promised more.

"The Armed Islamic Group have men who love to die..." read a text published by the Arab-language newspaper Al Hayat, translated by the Associated Press bureau in Beirut.

The claim said two men, one of them 16, drove a explosives-packed car that blew up in front of Algiers police headquarters Jan. 30, killing 42 people and injuring nearly 300.

It was the bloodiest single attack in a three-year Islamic insurgency in the country and the first by suicide bombers.

Meanwhile, security forces confirmed a report in the afternoon newspaper Horizons that Ahmad Kasmi, a member of the National Liberation Front's central committee, was decapitated last week.

The paper said that Kasmi's head was found Thursday at a bus station in Khamis Miliana, 100 kilometres west of Algiers. He had been kidnapped two days earlier.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the killing.

Kasmi was the second member of the party's central committee to be slain. The FLN, as it is known, ruled Algeria for nearly three decades and is blamed for the widespread corruption and mismanagement that has drained the nation's economy.

Al Hayat, based in London and published in several Arab capitals, said it received the claim of responsibility Saturday from the Armed Islamic Group, the most radical of the armed groups trying to topple the military-backed government. The group took responsibility for the Dec. 24 Air France hijacking in which three passengers were killed.

"In this (suicide) bombing operation it offered two men, firm as mountains, one of them 16 years old," added the GIA statement, signed by a GIA leader, Abu Abdil Rahmene Lamine.

The GIA said the target of the bomb attack was the police headquarters, in Amriouche street, in the centre of the Algerian capital.

"For decades this has been a headquarters for torture, murder and intimidation. Many a Muslim body have the barbaric instruments of torture crushed," it said.

"This symbol of sacrifice had to be removed. This hellish centre had to be destroyed," it added.

"There is no rest, no calm, no relecting, for the blessed month of Ramadan is the month of killing, fighting, conquests and victories. All the mujahideen must intensify military action in the holy war," it added.

"What Al Hayat said was a reference to the death of civilians in the explosion, the GIA said it did not consider itself immune from the mistakes contageot on war."

"Whenever a mistake is made and someone is wronged, the GIA gives a commitment to right the wrong and to apologise," the group said.

It said the members who carried out the operation on Monday were from a GIA brigade called "those who sign in blood." The car was carrying 160 kilograms of TNT, it added.

More threats

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Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Monday meets with scouts and guides taking part in a charity drive (Petra photo)

Ramadan campaign under way

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Monday reviewed the work of boy scouts and girl guides involved in collecting contributions for the needy families within the year's charity campaign launched during the month of Ramadan by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF).

The Princess met scouts and guides at the Hashemite Square downtown to discuss the campaign.

Nearly 10,000 young male and female students, members of the scout movements in Jordan, are involved in the campaign to raise funds and

in-kind contributions for needy families to be distributed during or after the Holy Month.

The Princess was briefed by the participants on the progress of the campaign and lauded their efforts and voluntary services for the nation.

Later the Princess met the president and members of the board of the Amman Chamber of Commerce to discuss the campaign.

Lauding merchants' support for the charity campaign, the Princess said the contributions reflected their keenness on helping the poor

in a show of social solidarity. The Princess told the meeting that the contributions would help QAF to extend assistance to the family heads to start a small business and become self-reliant.

Chamber President Haydar Murad welcomed the Princess and said that the contributions manifest the determination to ensure social solidarity in the Kingdom.

Murad called on the citizens and merchants to contribute generously to the campaign and announced a donation of JD60,000 to this year's campaign.

Their departure is expected to be followed by battles for Mogadishu's port and airport.

Washington supports Yemeni-Saudi talks

SANA'A (Agencies) — The United States on Sunday expressed support for negotiations in the 60-year-old Yemen-Saudi border dispute and urged good relations between the two Arabian Peninsula countries.

Sana'a Radio said President Bill Clinton in a written message to Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh expressed Washington's "welcome and support of the talks between the two countries with the aim of reaching a solution to the border issue."

The radio said Mr. Clinton, in the message conveyed by U.S. Ambassador to Sana'a David Newton, also expressed the administration's "keenness for the existence of good and cordial relations between the two neighbouring countries in a way consolidating security, peace and stability in the area."

There were border clashes in December and talks have been going on in Riyadh between Yemen and Saudi Arabia for two weeks.

The United States maintains strategic relations with Saudi Arabia and enjoys good ties with Yemen whose democratic process and multi-party system is encouraged by Washington, diplomats said.

Diplomats said on Sunday that Yemen, once a close ally of Iraq, has sent Iraqi military advisers back home after Washington expressed concern over their presence.

The London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat said on Saturday Yemen's relations with Washington had improved following the decision to get rid of the advisers, who had been training its pilots on advanced MiG-29 fighter planes.

Official Yemeni sources declined to comment on the

report.

Yemen and Saudi Arabia accuse each other of moving troops to the potentially oil-rich border area, disputed for 60 years.

Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani said in Cairo on Saturday he believed Riyadh had pulled back its forces from the area and denied his country had massed troops there.

Dr. Iryani visited Egypt, Syria and Jordan to brief their leaders on developments in the border talks.

Diplomats said on Sunday Yemen is seeking international support for a mechanism to monitor its disputed border with Saudi Arabia and ease tension between the two countries.

They said Yemen had revived an idea of forming a joint military committee of Yemeni and Saudi chiefs of staff and Egyptian and Syrian

representatives, first aired by official Yemeni sources last month but received coolly by Saudi Arabia.

It was not clear if Mr. Saleh raised this issue with Mr. Newton during their meeting.

Yemen is still recovering from a secessionist rebellion led by the army of former South Yemen which was crushed last July.

Yemen and Saudi Arabia opened talks in Riyadh on Jan. 23 to prevent new clashes on the border after Yemen accused Saudi Arabia of massing troops and tanks along its northeastern frontier.

Arab diplomats in Riyadh

said the talks were stalled

Sunday after Yemeni negotiators demanded the demarcation of the whole of the border between the two countries.

Greek experts cast doubt on Alexander's tomb

CAIRO (AFP) — An official Greek delegation on Sunday east sought on a Greek archaeological team to have discovered the long-lost tomb of Alexander the Great in Egypt's western desert.

Liana Souvaltzis based her claim on inscriptions which she said referred directly to Alexander the Great on three standing blocks — or steles — discovered at Al Maraki, 16 kilometers northwest of the desert oasis of Siwa.

"I do not know if we have seen all the inscriptions, but those we have seen have nothing to do with the period of (Alexander's contemporary) Ptolemy I, and neither has that name nor that of Alexander appears," said Yannis Tzedakis, head of Greece's archaeological services and a member of the delegation.

Ms. Souvaltzis, 47, has been excavating the site of a Doric temple at Al-Maraki, 750 kilometers west of Cairo for six years.

She said she had "irrefutable proof" that she had discovered the tomb of Alexander the Great, who died in

323 B.C. at the age of 33. However, some Western experts reacted with scepticism to Tuesday's announcement of her discovery, insisting that Alexander was laid to rest in Alexandria, the port city he founded in 332 B.C.

The Greek delegation of experts arrived in Egypt Thursday to check the authenticity of the discovery.

"The fragments of inscriptions we have been shown belong to the Roman era, at the start of the second century A.D.," Mr. Tzedakis told reporters after visiting the site.

The head of the delegation, George Thomas, secretary-general of the Culture Ministry in Athens, added a note of caution.

"Such a short visit in the absence of the archaeologist, who unfortunately could not be with us because of commitments in Cairo, is not enough to confirm the opinions of Ms. Souvaltzis," Mr. Thomas said in a statement.

He described her discovery as "an important architectural monument."

"Respect for history and deontology means we must wait for the excavation to be completed and the first scientific publication to be made," he said.

Mr. Tzedakis said Sunday: "To read an inscription which is in fragments is not so easy if you are not an expert. Possibly there is a mistake in the deciphering of the puzzle."

First, be said, "we have to be sure this is a tomb, and then start thinking whether it is Alexander's tomb."

He described the site as a complex. "We do not know if it is a sanctuary, a temple or a temple with a tomb, because there is a crypt" which has not yet been excavated.

At a press conference Saturday, Ms. Souvaltzis said she called on the "Greek people to be very proud that Greek hands have discovered the tomb of the greatest Greek of all times," and refused to answer questions from non-Greek reporters.

The delegation was to return to Athens Monday.

Somali warlord proposes conference

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Somali warlord Ali Mahdi Mohammed on Monday proposed a national reconciliation conference to provide this lawless country with a central government presiding over regions with a high degree of autonomy.

The plan — the result of deliberations in north Mogadishu over three months and 21 days by a "peace conference among allies" of the self-styled "president" — was immediately dismissed by Mohammad Qanyaro Afrah, chairman of a rival "peace conference" in south Mogadishu among allies of warlord Mohammad Farah Aideed.

Mr. Afrah's reaction — that the initiative was "unrealistic, contradictory, and signed by individuals who do not represent any faction" — made it clear that the stand off between Mr. Ali Mahdi and General Aideed will continue as the last 8,000 U.N. troops and civilians leave Somalia, which has been without a government since the overthrow of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in January 1991.

Their departure is expected to be followed by battles for Mogadishu's port and airport.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Bush plot' verdicts due on Feb. 20

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait's cassation court on Monday adjourned until Feb. 20 its verdicts on seven Iraqis and two Kuwaitis accused of plotting to kill former President George Bush, justice officials said. The verdict was postponed because the court's presiding judge, Allah Al Issa, was out of the country, officials told reporters here. Five Iraqis and one Kuwaiti were sentenced to death by the state security court on June 4 for involvement in the plot to assassinate Mr. Bush during a visit to Kuwait in April 1993. Seven others — six Iraqis and one Kuwaiti — were sentenced to prison terms ranging from six months to 12 years. A third Kuwaiti was acquitted. Nine appealing against their sentences with the others having already served their jail terms.

Killer of Egyptian actress to hang

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian criminal court sentenced to death by hanging the killer of comic actress Widad Hamdi, Cairo newspapers reported on Monday. They said the verdict was endorsed by Egypt's grand mufti, Sheikh Mohammed Sayyed Tantawi. Hamdi was stabbed to death in her Cairo apartment last year by film impresario Mata Hanna Ghali who confessed to police that he carried out the murder because he was short of money and had planned to rob her. Hamdi, 65, specialised in playing the role of servants.

Israel rescues families of 'collaborators'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The army is to move the families of 11 Arab informers from the Gaza Strip to safety in Israel, military officials said Monday. They are among about 40 families, mostly bedouins of Egyptian origin, who live under army protection in a "collaborator" village called Dehayna in the south of the Gaza Strip. The group will be re-settled near Beersheva in the desert after complaining of "constant provocation" by Palestinian police. The Jewish state, which has armed some collaborators, has promised to take in thousands of those who informed on their Palestinian neighbours. Some have been granted Israeli nationality and given new identities.

Keep off Israeli buses, U.S. warns staff

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The United States embassy in Israel has told staff not to use public transport in the wake of a suicide bombing which killed 21 people at a bus stop. "The warning is primarily aimed at buses because of the high incidence of attacks," an embassy official told AFP on Monday. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for blowing up 21 Israelis on Jan. 22 near the coastal resort of Netanya. A total of 56 people have died in four bus bombings carried out over the last 10 months by militants opposed to the Middle East peace process. The official said staff at the embassy received a warning letter on Jan. 23, which was in fact an updated reminder of long-standing safety instructions.

Egyptian on trial for 1993 hijacking

DUESSELDORF (AP) — An Egyptian man went on trial here Monday for a 1993 air hijacking that was meant to force U.S. authorities to free a Muslim cleric accused of plotting to blow up New York City landmarks. No connection has turned up between air pirate Khalid Gharib and Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, the blind cleric who is on trial in New York City. Wearing sunglasses and constantly smiling on the first day of his own trial, Gharib told the Dusseldorf state court he had received frequent psychiatric treatment while in the Egyptian military. Saying he had a bomb in his suitcase, Gharib commanded an Amsterdam-bound Dutch KLM airliner shortly after takeoff from Tunis, Tunisia on Aug. 15, 1993 and forced it to land in Dusseldorf. Gharib made a number of demands, including that Sheikh Abdul Rahman be flown to Egypt. Throughout the 11-hour hijacking Gharib had his hands in small boxes that were in his front trouser pockets. Police feared the boxes were remote-control devices but they turned out to be cigarette packets. Gharib let all 131 passengers and all but two crew members leave the Boeing 737 at Dusseldorf airport. The pilot and chief steward climbed out the cockpit window while Gharib was using the toilet. A crack German anti-terrorist unit stormed the plane and arrested Gharib without firing a shot as he was leaving the toilet.

Iranian deputy sentenced to jail

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Kuwait's cassation court on Tuesday, Feb. 20, its verdicts on seven accused of plotting to kill former US president George Bush, justice officials said. The court's presiding judge, one of the country's officials told reporters, on June 4 for involvement in the killing of former US president George Bush during a visit to Kuwait — six Iraqis and one Kuwaiti — was sentenced to life terms ranging from six to 15 years. One Kuwaiti was acquitted. Nine others were sentenced with the others.

Kuwaiti actress to hang

Egyptian criminal court sentences killer of comic actress Wafaa El Sayed to death on Monday. They say Egypt's grand mufti, Ayman Hamdi was stabbed in his home last year by film impresario who was short of money. El Sayed, 36, was killed in his home in Cairo. He had specialised in playing the role of a woman in a movie.

families of 'collaborators'

AMMAN (Petra) — The army reportedly said Monday that it has arrested mostly bedouins of Egyptian origin in a "collaboration" with Beersheva in the desert, which has armed some of their neighbours. Some 100 families have been displaced by the fighting.

buses, U.S. Warns

The United States embassy in Amman has issued a warning to people at a bus station in Amman because of an American official told us that the usual route of travel through the bus bombing area is now being used by militants opposing the Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

al for 1993 hijacking

An Egyptian man was arrested in Amman on Tuesday after he was found to be carrying a bomb in his car. He was taken to a police station in Amman. A second man was also arrested. The man had recently been to the Egyptian embassy in Amman. He was later released.

Envoy present credentials

LUXEMBOURG (Petra) — Jordan's Ambassador to Belgium Khaled Madadha has presented his credentials to the prince of Luxembourg as non-resident ambassador to Luxembourg. Mr. Madadha conveyed greetings from His Majesty King Hussein and Prevention of Blindness Society, received the invitation Monday from the conference's council Secretary General Akef Al Mughabi to participate in the conference to which around 1,300 ophthalmologists will take part.

RJ to fly to Barcelona

AMMAN (Petra) — Ahmad Jweib, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) returned to Amman from Spain Monday and announced he concluded a deal whereby Royal Jordan (RJ) will operate flights to Barcelona, in addition to Madrid, the capital of Spain. He said that the agreement was reached in talks with Spanish Civil Aviation authorities. The two sides have also agreed to amend the present bilateral agreement in a manner that would cater to the requirements of security, in accordance with regulations set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Lawyers announce candidates

AMMAN (Petra) — Five Jordanian lawyers have announced their candidature for the Bar Association presidency and 28 others for the board membership prior to the Bar's elections which are scheduled for March 10. A total of 2,700 Jordanian lawyers are eligible to take part in the elections.

Fuel distributors referred to courts

AMMAN (Petra) — The Meteorology and Specification Corporation (MSC) has referred a number of fuel distributors to the competent courts for trial, after finding them guilty of tampering with the metres and measurements. The corporation has withdrawn their permits and prevented them from distributing fuel until sentences are passed by the courts concerned. The MSC has recently discovered that 14 fuel tankers and two fuel stations and gas distributors were violating the meteorology and specification law, by tampering with metres and measures, thus affecting the quantity of fuel sold to citizens.

14,000 tonnes of sugar arrive in Aqaba

AQABA (Petra) — A vessel laden with 14,000 tonnes of sugar destined for the Ministry of Supply has now docked in Aqaba harbour, according to the Ministry of Supply. It said in a statement that the sugar, which is being unloaded in the ministry's warehouses in Aqaba, will be moved to Amman and other cities later on to meet the sugar shortages in the local markets.



PREMIER'S VISIT — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Monday visited the Interior Ministry where he chaired a meeting reviewing the ministry's draft laws and regulations which were presented by Interior Minister Salameh Hammad. The meeting reviewed a number of matters related to the Interior Ministry's activities and plans concerning Parliament for debate and approval.

Australian parliamentarians laud ties with Jordan

CANBERRA (Petra) — Speakers of the Senate and House of Representatives in Australia Monday lauded the strong and progressive ties between Jordan and Australia, especially in parliamentary and economic fields.

The Australian parliamentarians, who were speaking during a visit to the House of Parliament by a Jordanian parliamentary delegation led by Deputy Taher Al Masri, voiced Australia's backing for the Middle East peace efforts and their appreciation of His Majesty King Hussein's role to achieve peace and the conclusion of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

They also emphasised the need to further bolster Australian-Jordanian parliamentary cooperation and the exchange of expertise, and said Australia was quite ready to provide any possible assistance to Jordan in all fields.

The Australian officials said they were impressed by Jordan's fast development and economic endeavours and expressed hope that Jordan and Australia will increase the level of cooperation in parliamentary affairs.

They said that the Australian parliamentarians attended part of the Australian parliament meetings in Canberra.

for such increases.

In reply, Mr. Masri noted that his team's visit marked the first Jordanian parliamentarians' visit to Australia, expressing hope that it will mark the beginning of strong cooperation in parliamentary affairs.

Mr. Masri, who conveyed a message from the speakers of the Senate and the Lower House of Parliament in Jordan, extended an invitation to the Australian spokesman of parliament to visit Jordan and examine the Jordanian democratic process.

The Jordanian parliamentarians attended part of the Australian parliament meetings in Canberra.

"We are very happy with what we have achieved and

Israeli Knesset delegation visits Kingdom

King Hussein reassures Jordan's commitment to comprehensive peace

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday said that "we will do all we can for peace in the region to be a comprehensive peace between our two countries and peoples would be an example for others in the region to come to work together and fulfil the dreams and aspirations and achieve what is their right. Nothing in the world would equal the feeling that I am sure all of us share, that we will be leaving behind us something worthwhile, something worthy of our efforts and endeavours."

His Majesty expressed hope that the time will come when the region will be a region of peace and cooperation, and that the forces of peace will overcome those of darkness.

Following is the full text of His Majesty's speech:

Ladies and Gentlemen ... honourable guests

"It is a pleasure for me, my brother the Crown Prince, prime minister, the speaker of Parliament, and the Senate and all my colleagues here to welcome you on this evening ... we have indeed covered a long distance within a very short space of time but if things are to be explained, they can only be explained by the fact that, I believe, both sides rose up to the level of responsibility not only towards ourselves but towards our peoples and their future and towards generations to come.

"I am very happy that this meeting has taken place and I hope that the subjects and topics that were discussed ... I believe they are fundamental for our joint effort

we are hopeful that we will achieve more in what I regard as a period of consolidation before us, and, hopefully, peace between our two countries and peoples would be an example for others in the coming generations."

King Hussein in a speech delivered upon receiving a delegation representing the Israeli Knesset at the Hashemite Palace, in the presence of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and senior officials, added that "we hope peace between our two countries and peoples will be an example for others in our region to follow."

He said that "we will do all we can for peace in the region to be a comprehensive peace between our two countries and peoples would be an example for others in the region to come to work together and fulfil the dreams and aspirations and achieve what is their right. Nothing in the world would equal the feeling that I am sure all of us share, that we will be leaving behind us something worthwhile, something worthy of our efforts and endeavours."

"I believe that it is so very important for us in the times ahead to establish more and more face-to-face contacts to direct personal contacts between us on all levels and I am sure that we will find, once this is achieved and the more it is achieved, that our objectives, hopes and aspirations are one and the same. It will pave the way for our building together the kind of future that is worthy of our people. You are most welcome as honoured representatives of the people and the State of Israel here in Jordan this evening and I hope that we will have the pleasure in the future of welcoming many of you again from time to time.

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Burma rebels set up headquarters; Thais begin return of refugees

BANGKOK (AFP) — Ethnic Karen rebels, routed from their mountain headquarters last month, said Monday they had returned to Burma to continue fighting, while Thai border units began repatriating refugees to areas they said were now safe.

In a seven-page statement, the Karen National Union (KNU) said its military leader, General Bo Mya, had set up a temporary headquarters in "Karen-held territory elsewhere inside Burma."

He and other senior KNU officials would continue to battle Rangoon's attempts to "bulldoze the KNU into submission," it said.

As the rebels prepared a fresh start for their war for autonomy, Thailand began repatriating the first some 10,000 Karen refugees who fled fighting last month between troops of the Rangoon junta and ethnic insurgents.

A total of 1,273 Karen were sent across the border to Burma Sunday from Kan-chanaburi province, 155 kilometres west of here, an official with the Thai Ninth Infantry Division said. Another 911 were to be sent

back Monday, he said.

Those refugees had reportedly fled fighting and enforced labour around the rebel Karen outpost of Kawmawlaw in Tavoy-Mergui. The official told AFP Monday that fighting in the area had stopped.

Some 7,000 to 8,000 other Karen who fled battles in eastern Burma remained huddled at half a dozen camps along the Thai-Burma border further north, according to Karen relief sources.

"They are afraid that they will be sent back now," a KNU refugee official said recently. "They know what the (Thai Interior Ministry) has said."

Last week, Thai Interior Minister Sanan Kachornprasart was reported as saying he would repatriate all Karen refugees immediately because they were fleeing a military action, not political persecution.

But contrary statements by other senior Thai officials have left policy at the border ambiguous.

"I think the Thai army is waiting to see who will set the

policy," Naing Aung, chairman of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), said recently. "This has been confusing for them, too."

Early Monday, Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai flew to the northern border district of Mae Sariang where authorities were coordinating relief efforts, Thai Radio reported.

The premier did not speak with reporters, but the trip underscored the increasing tension along the Moei River, where government troops have been seen marching northward.

Just a few kilometres east of Mae Sariang, a Thai border police officer was shot and critically wounded Sunday when his patrol tried to disarm three men with rifles at Mae San Laep border town, a Thai border officer said Monday.

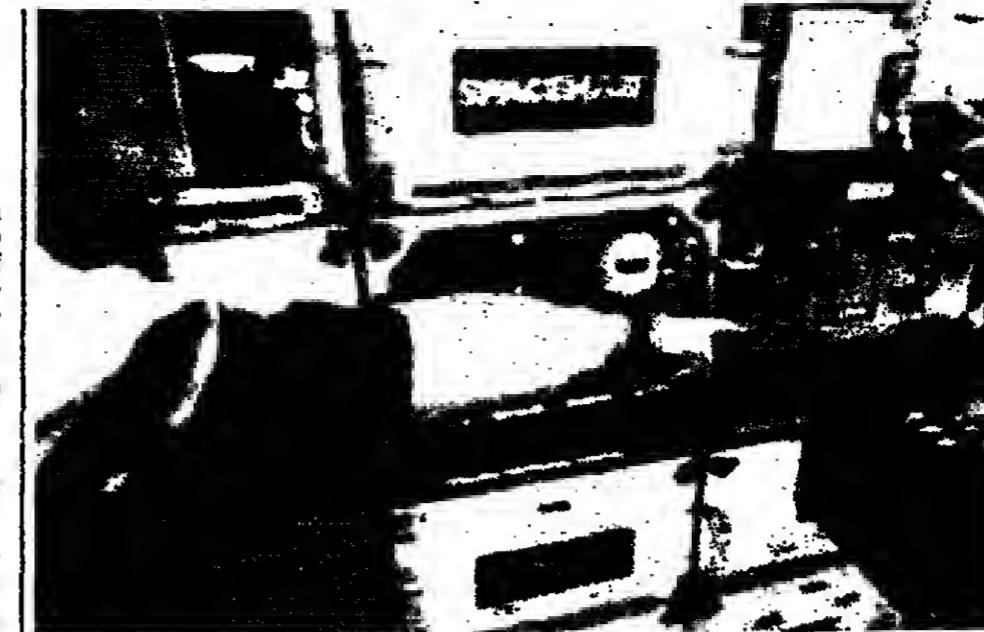
The unidentified men fired on four Thai officers, then fled to a boat and crossed to Burma, the official with BBP's Unit 337 told AFP. The wounded officer was in intensive care in Mae Sariang Monday, he said.

The KNU has asked Chuan and other Thai officials to acknowledge "the need of the KNU and other (Burme) opposition organisations to have access to the international community through Thailand and to be able to make their political voice heard."

Thousands of ethnic Karen spilled across the border late last month, when the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the official name of the Rangoon junta, began a concentrated campaign to end Karen rebel resistance in Burma.

The junta, breaking its own unilateral ceasefire with the rebels, took the KNU and opposition headquarters of Maner-paw on Jan. 27. The SLORC launched artillery and ground attacks on several other positions simultaneously.

The move has drawn criticism from the United States and caused some Thai officials, among them Foreign Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, to question the effectiveness of Thailand's economic policy of "constructive engagement" with the Rangoon regime.



Russian Astronaut Vladimir Titov points to Charlotte Robot (black box) in the commercial SPACERHAB module carried in the space shuttle Discovery's cargo bay. The shuttle, with international crew of six, will fly-around the Russian space station Mir during their scheduled eight-day mission in space (AP photo).

Russian space agency to NASA: No leaks allowed near Mir station

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The message from the Russian Space Agency to NASA is clear: Your leaking space shuttle cannot come near our Mir.

With time running out, NASA ordered shuttle astronauts to try to reassure a leaking jet in a long-shot effort to stop the drainage and permit a close encounter Monday with Russia's orbiting Mir space station.

It didn't work.

The thruster was still leaking a trail of icy fuel when the crew awoke early Monday, about 1100 kilometres and 13 hours before the scheduled meeting.

Russian officials insist that, unless the steering jet stops spewing fuel, the shuttle discovery must stay at least 122 metres from Mir — 111 metres farther than planned. They fear the small chunks of

frozen capsule attached to the station and needed by the three Mir cosmonauts to return to Earth next month.

Mission operations director Randy Stone said National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) engineers believe the leaking nitrogen tetroxide would not attach to anything and poses no danger.

But the Russians aren't convinced, "and it's their call," he said.

"They don't fully understand all of the capabilities of our vehicle... It's mostly just the very methodical and conservative engineering approach that they take to things when they don't have a full knowledge of the system," he said.

The original plan called for Discovery and its crew of six to fly within 10 metres of the station as a dress rehearsal.

for the first shuttle-Mir docking in June. NASA wanted to see how well the shuttle handled next to a 100-tonne station and test navigation and communication systems.

"Obviously, the closer we can get the better it will be," said Discovery pilot Eileen Collins. "But even if we only go to 300 metres... we will still be getting a lot of good information."

Months before the mission, the U.S. and Russian space agencies agreed that discovery would forgo the close encounter if any one of seven critical steering thrusters failed.

Seven Atlantis-Mir dockings are planned through 1997. After that, NASA plans to start building an international space station with Russia and other countries.

Big earthquake rattles N. Zealand

WELLINGTON (AFP) — An earthquake measuring a potentially devastating seven on the Richter Scale occurred off the coast of New Zealand Monday but miraculously caused no damage.

The effects of the quake were minimised by the epicentre's location in the Pacific Ocean about 125 kilometres (77 miles) southeast of East Cape, according to Martin Reynolds, deputy chief seismologist at the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences.

Nevertheless, he said, "it was a decent-sized shake and felt from Auckland to Christchurch," he said.

The tremor occurred about 11:50 a.m. (2250 GMT), but aftershocks were still being felt 4½ hours after the first jolt, and although shorter and less powerful, were still unearthing for some residents.

At the east coast township of Tolaga Bay, one of the

closest points to the epicentre, motel owner Wally Tukukino said there had been five aftershocks in that period.

He said the initial quake seemed to last about 45 seconds and felt like a rolling movement. Some of the aftershocks had lasted as long as 15 seconds.

Ministry of Civil Defence duty officer Tom Finnimore said there had been reports of objects falling from shelves in Tolaga Bay.

Doug McClure, western actor, dies at 59

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Doug McClure, the blond, boyish cowboy star of the television shows *The Virginian*, *The Overland Trail* and *The Men From Shiloh*, died Saturday of cancer Sunday night. He was 59.

McClure died at his home in the Los Angeles suburb of Sherman Oaks with family and friends by his side, said McClure's friend, Dennis Mora.

After struggling a year with lung cancer, McClure appeared last Dec. 16 for the installation of his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Getting the star helped him feel better, he told *Wishers*.

"It gave me the incentive to get well, and I well," he declared.

But on Jan. 8, the actor collapsed from an apparent stroke on the set of a theatrical film in Hawaii and was flown to Los Angeles for hospitalization.

Doctors discovered the cancer had spread to his liver and bones, Mora said.

"Doug was one of the kindest people I have ever

known, and a real gentleman," said Mora, who recently produced several marketing videos that McClure appeared in and directed. "He was a true professional — always prepared on the set and easy and fun to work with. I'll miss him very much."

McClure's career took off in 1960 when he was cast as William Bendix's sidekick in the NBC series *The Overland Trail*. The show lasted only a half-season, and he immediately started on *Checkmate*, a private-eye series.

In 1962, the actor joined the cast of *The Virginian*, an ambitious, big-budget NBC project which was the first filmed series with 90-minute episodes. McClure played the role of Trampas, the villain in the Owen Wister novel and the three movie versions. Trampas was rehabilitated in the series as a happy-go-lucky young cowpoke.

McClure fit easily into the Western atmosphere. He had been riding horseback since the age of 8 in his hometown of Glendale, California. As a teenager he spent summers

at a cattle ranch and was a bronco-buster in occasional rodeos.

After eight successful years of *The Virginian*, NBC introduced a spinoff, *The Men From Shiloh*. It lasted one season.

"I had this feeling everybody thought I was dead," he said in a 1988 interview. "I didn't quit. I did some films and theatre in London. I went to New York. But I had been on television so much, people thought I wasn't around."

McClure returned to TV series in 1975 for the one-season Western *Barbary Coast*. He continued making guest appearances on TV, notably in the 1977 classic *Roots*. His other film credits include *Cannonball Run II*, *52 Pickup*, *Omega Syndrome*, *Dark Before Dawn*, *Tapheads*.

In addition to his wife,

Diane, McClure is survived by two children from previous marriages, Tane and Valerie McClure; his mother, Clara Clapp, and a brother, Reed.

Catalans pledge support for Spain's Gonzalez

BARCELONA, Spain (R)

— Spain's ruling Socialists are sure of Catalan support at least for another year even if they suffer a ringing defeat in May's municipal elections and recent political scandals continue.

Catalan leader Jordi Pujol, who has a rare meeting with opposition Popular Party (PP) leader Jose Maria Aznar Monday, says he has no intention of seeking any deal with the PP.

"We are saying we guarantee support to the Socialists at least until the next State of the Nation address in 1996, even if there is an electoral collapse (in May)," Mr. Pujol said.

"A hypothetical Aznar government is not on the agenda. The PP is a valid political alternative for the future and it is important to keep up a dialogue," he told foreign journalists here Friday.

About 150 well-wishers turned out to greet her at the hospital, far fewer and quieter than the mobs that followed her on her previous visits in 1986 and 1990.

Mr. Pujol criticised the picture he said had been painted in the foreign press of a Socialist government on its last legs, and said not even more arrests of former government officials in the death squad investigations would shake Catalan support.

A former state security chief has already been remanded in custody in December, and former Under-Secretary of State for Security Rafael Vera is presently under investigation.

"If Vera is imprisoned, it would produce a shock, but it would not make us change our minds," said Mr. Pujol.

But while the Catalan leader was generally happy with the 1995 economic programme that Mr. Gonzalez will lay out Wednesday, he was resigned to a slower pace of economic reform this year than he would like.

"What is the alternative? Either we have early elections or we continue what we are doing," he said. "A government of the right is highly unlikely under present circumstances."

"It's true they won't do all

the reforms this year that they should. We have insisted but they don't dare," he said.

"This is a year in which we'll see if Spain can turn the corner, both in economic recovery but also in industrial policy. It's an historical opportunity for Spain to change course."

Asked if the Catalans rejected outright any alliance with the centre-right Popular Party, Mr. Pujol said his support is for programmes and for those who are capable of carrying them out.

The Catalans, he said, gave their support to the Socialists "because they have the ability to carry out the programmes we want" and this would continue to be its guiding principle.

Whether the Catalans

would support a Socialist government not headed by Mr. Gonzalez, he said, would only be a hypothesis in the event of a transition government prior to elections.

U.S. actor to film in Sarajevo

BELGRADE (R) — U.S. actor Harvey Keitel, star of the films *Pulp Fiction* and *The Piano*, will shoot scenes for a new movie in besieged Sarajevo next month. The *Gaze Of Odysseus* is the story of a director, played by Keitel, who goes to the Bosnian capital to search for an old Balkan film. "It's not a political film although Sarajevo is part of the narrative," Keitel told Reuters Monday. "It's the story of a soul's journey to redeem itself." It will be the first time a commercial film has been shot in Sarajevo since the siege by Bosnian Serbs began nearly three years ago. Keitel was in Belgrade for its International Film Festival. He was presented with a special Golden Locomotive Award.

Campbell 'regrets' posing naked for Madonna book

LONDON (AFP) — British supermodel Naomi Campbell has expressed "regrets" for posing naked in the pages of "Sex," pop star Madonna's book of steamy photographs. "My mum and grandma were embarrassed," she told the latest edition of the magazine *Esquire* — for whom she also agreed to a photo shoot — adding: "I'm learning from my mistakes."

Alligator captured in Cologne

COLOGNE, Germany (AFP) — Police captured an alligator measuring almost a metre (over three feet) in length near a main road in this western city. The reptile, identified as a caiman, was taken to Cologne Zoo in an armoured car, police said. Its owner was not identified. Police speculated that it could have been cast out of the Rhine, which flows through the city, during historically high floods last week.

'Racist' Bugs Bunny video withdrawn

LOS ANGELES, California (AFP) — The MGM-UA film company has agreed to withdraw from sale a video containing a Bugs Bunny cartoon made during World War II which expresses racist attitudes towards the Japanese.

The video, a compilation representing a history of animation, contains a cartoon entitled *Bugs Nips The Nips* which portrays the cartoon hero offering booby-trapped, ice cream comets to a group of Japanese people. As the cartoon encourages them to accept, he speaks to them using such terms as "bowlegs," "monkey-face" and "slant-eyes." Around 8,000 copies of the video compilation have been sold since it went on sale in September 1983. The company decided to withdraw the video after receiving complaints from the Japanese-American Citizen's League.

Charles to be patron of U.N. celebrations

LONDON (R) — Prince Charles will be the British patron of celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, the organisation said. The United Nations Association said the heir to the throne will preside over several events including the 50th anniversary of the first U.N. General Assembly on Jan. 11, 1996. "We are truly delighted that Prince Charles has agreed to act as our patron," said Lord Howe, president of the British committee for the commemoration. "With his deep commitment to fostering international understanding he will play a key role in ensuring that this important anniversary receives the recognition which it deserves."

5-year-old brings handgun to school

WASHINGTON (R) — Police took into custody a five-year-old boy in Maryland after he took a loaded semi-automatic handgun to his elementary school and showed it off to his classmates, police said Saturday. A teacher at the school in Prince George's County, outside Washington D.C., confiscated the .380 calibre weapon Friday after she saw the boy showing it to a group of other students in the back of a classroom, a police spokesman said.



Britain's Princess of Wales puts two children on the head as she talks with Hospital President Professor Kobayashi during a visit to the National Children's Hospital in Tokyo. Earlier the princess had flown into the Japanese capital to start a four-day visit, and a launch and tour of some wards was her first official engagement (AP photo).

ceived then as a symbol of European glamour and elegance.

This time the trip is far more low-key.

She replaced the Madonna-like sleek haircut she wowed New York's fashion world with last week with the familiar "princess di" cut.

At the hospital, Erina Sarumi Sakaguchi, a six-year-old girl suffering from muscular atrophy, gave the princess a card with a picture of a rabbit and a message that she was pleased to meet the princess.

"I told her a princess was coming and she thinks Diana is Cinderella," said her mother Sachiko.

The princess visited a cancer ward where the terminally ill children dress in pink and have pink bed clothes and decorations to cheer them up. In another ward children had prepared a banner saying "welcome to SC, Princess Diana", writing her name in the Japanese pronunciation.

The last time Princess Diana came to Japan was with Prince Charles to attend Emperor Akihito's enthronement in 1990.

She was rapturously re-

World News

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U.S. actor to
in Sarajevo

BELGRADE (R) — Actor Harvey Keitel, the hit films *Pulp Fiction* and *The Piano*, will star in a new movie, "Gaze Of Odysseus," the story of a director, Keitel, who goes to Sarajevo to make a political film, "Sarajevo Is Part Of Me." Keitel's soul's journey to self. It will be his first commercial film to be shot in Sarajevo, nearly three years after he was in Belgrade for the presentation of his Golden Locomotion.

Campbell
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LONDON (AP) — Supermodel Naomi Campbell has expressed regret for posing naked in a book of steamy photos. "My mum and I were embarrassed," she said. "Esquire — for advertising — for adding: 'I'm learning my mistakes.'

Alligator cap
in Cologne

COLOGNE, Germany (AP) — Police officers have been forced to leave their homes near a river in this western city after it burst its banks. A spokesman said: "The water was so high that we had to leave the Rhine, through the car & eventually had to

Racist' Bugs
Bunny video
withdrawn

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In a competitive race to draw racing fans, a track made from a truck which expects to attract more than 100,000 spectators to the event, has been named "Bugs Bunny's Land." The track, featuring a large Bugs Bunny statue, offers both a dream come true for Japanese people and a reminder that the track is as "Bugs Bunny's Land."

Karachi remains tense after weekend of violence

KARACHI (Agencies) — Angry youths burned tyres in the streets and set a bus on fire Monday following a weekend of sectarian violence that left 33 dead and dozens injured.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said she believed "foreign hand" was behind the killings, a reference to archrival India. However, she offered no evidence.

Police and paramilitary troops in armoured vehicles patrolled the Liaquatabad district in central Karachi, where both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims have come under attack.

Police described the area as tense and said young men set up burning tyre barricades and torched one public bus Monday morning. But no new shootings were reported.

Twenty-one people were killed in two drive-by shootings Sunday at Sunni Muslim



Shortly after returning to their hometown Ochten, inhabitants of the Dutch village walk the top of the sandbag-covered dyke to see the current situation. The whole

Last Dutch flood evacuees go home

AMSTERDAM (Agencies) — The last Dutch flood evacuees headed home Monday after a mass return over the weekend as authorities declared the majority of dikes around the downstream Maas and Waal Rivers safe.

"The situation is more or less back to normal," an Interior Ministry spokesman said. "The remaining people are being allowed home this morning and the rest of the livestock are going back from Tuesday."

Swollen rivers forced 250,000 people to evacuate their homes last week in the

Netherlands' worst natural disaster in 40 years.

But swiftly receding water levels allowed the last 14,000 people, from the villages of Gorinchem, Oostrum and Boven Hardinxveld in the west of the evacuated region, to return home Monday.

On Sunday 180,000 people in and around the towns of Tiel and Culemborg were greeted by signs improvised by police saying "welcome home."

Thousands of people had already returned to their homes on Friday and Saturday.

Water officials said most of the main rivers and canals would reopen to shipping later Monday.

Dutch waterways are a key artery through northwest Europe, linking the giant ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam with the continent's industrial heartland. They had been closed since Jan. 29 to try to prevent damage to the country's ancient dikes.

Many of those returning home expressed gratitude to the army and emergency services which toiled all last week to shore up weakened dikes and guard homes against looting.

As northern Europe cleaned up after last week's torrential floods, much of southern Europe continued to parch in a persistent and expensive drought.

Since 1990, rain clouds have virtually ignored the southern stretches of Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece on the northern edge of the Mediterranean as well as Israel and North Africa.

In Spain, as crops wilt and large tracts of land fall victim to increasing desertification, two years of government heel-dragging have left the country without a national water plan.

Growing concern over the drought has begun to raise fundamental questions over how water is used — or misused — in Spain.

With proposals to build 150 new dams and dozens more river-diversion canals, the National Water Plan planned to distribute water from the rain-sufficient north to the arid south. But so far the plan — which pits ministries, engineers, farms and ecologists against each other — has been unable to earn parliament's approval.

In southern Spain reservoirs are only 10 per cent full, more than 2 million people face daily water restrictions and corn, rice, cotton, olive, and sugar beet harvests are

hit by a severe water shortage.

"Parliament said that before it looked at the national water plan we should have an irrigation plan. Then it called for another plan on the water basins," said Public Works Minister Jose Borell. "You get the impression they're not interested in the sending them the water plan."

Authorities also fear catastrophic consequences for tourism, Spain's leading industry. Major resorts like Marbella already face up to 16 hours of water restrictions, while some residents of nearby Fuengirola have resorted to filling buckets at public fountains.

"Year after year it is just getting worse," said Antonio Alcaraz, president of the Guadiana River Hydrographic Confederation.

Crop and livestock farmers put losses at more than \$4.6 billion for the past year alone, while the government has invested some 40 billion pesetas (\$300 million) in emergency reservoir construction and river diversion measures since 1992.

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Opinion & Analysis

JORDAN TIMES, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1990

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ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES
AL RAI daily Monday welcomed the news about reported Saudi forces withdrawal from the Yemeni borders. The withdrawal was vital for restoring peace between the two neighbours and necessary for averting a conflict that would only deal a serious blow to Arab solidarity, said the paper. Indeed, the Arab states are in need to address the damage that was caused to the Arab Nation as a result of the Gulf crisis, which harmed the interests of Arab people, said the daily. By avoiding a new tragedy and opting for reason and brotherly dialogue, the leaderships in Sanaa and Riyadh have displayed wisdom that will benefit the Arab World at large, said the daily. Lauding the current efforts to secure a permanent solution to the border dispute, the paper said that there can be no winners in conflicts between two Arab states and only through peaceful dialogue can all Arab problems be resolved and tragedies averted.

AL DUSTOUR daily said the Jordanian-Egyptian-Palestinian meeting in Cairo to discuss coordination of issues with regard to the Palestine refugees question was significant not only because the issue at hand is vital for the aspiration of peace, but also because it was the first coordination meeting since the Oslo agreement of 1993. Regretting that so much precious time has been lost before the three countries came together to discuss the refugee problem, the paper said that the meeting was necessary before the foreign ministers of the three countries meet with the Israeli foreign minister later this month. Since Israel holds different views regarding the refugees problem from those of the Arab countries, the Arab side can better negotiate with the Israelis through a joint stand and concerted effort, continued the paper. The meeting manifested the Arab sides' concern over the fate of the refugees.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Randi G. Kloss

Onion rings, paper crowns and the meaning of fences

I FOUND it intriguing yesterday to read in the local newspapers several separate news items that seemed to deal with very different issues, but that, in fact, reflected a common dynamic. The items were about an Israeli parliamentary team visiting Amman for talks with Jordanian officials, U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown visiting the region to promote greater U.S.-Middle East business contacts, our minister of social development stressing the need to focus more on tackling poverty in Jordan, our information minister stating that all aspects of our state-owned local media are being reviewed, and the aftermath of the financial collapse in Mexico that generated a \$50 billion international rescue package.

The common denominator among these different stories, in my view, is the raising of the following fundamental questions: Will the post-peace Middle East open itself to Western commercial forces to such an extent that our region will primarily become an appendage to the U.S.-dominated global marketplace of popular culture and consumer commodities? Or, rather, will we have the fortitude to work for the combination of political democratisation, intellectual honesty and greater socio-economic equity that present themselves as a viable antidote to the commercial-cultural bazaar that increasingly beckons us from the West?

This struck me as a rather urgent question a few weeks ago when I was in the Gulf region visiting a small Arab country that prided itself on maintaining the cultural identity of its people, especially their native dress. Only medical doctors, nurses, commercial aircraft pilots and armed forces personnel, as far as I could see on many previous visits to this country, wore Western-style uniforms during working hours. In January 1995, however, the lines of cultural identity had been breached suddenly and dramatically: Scores of native young Arabs working in Burger King restaurants had discarded their traditional clothes and were wearing blazing red Burger King uniforms, complete with little paper crowns.

Much as I enjoy Burger King food (double whoppers with cheese and a small portion of onion rings are my favourite), and after baseball, they form the point of optimum convergence between my Arab nationalist political sentiments and my firm commitment to constructive, mutually satisfying cultural interaction with the West. I was still shocked by the symbolism of what I had seen: an ancient, strong Arab culture had discarded perhaps its most powerful day-to-day symbol of its identity — its clothes — for the sake of conforming to the profit dictates of American-style fast food outlets. What was next to come? Would little girls dress up as extra large portions of French fries and prance across our television screens? Who amongst us would be the next to drop our own, old ways, to don the outfits created and loved by the impersonal money markets of the West, and eternally to dance for dollars?

This is only one example, perhaps a weak one, of the single most important danger that I see confronting most Arab societies, including ours in Jordan: the danger that in our haste to prod economic expansion and avert the spectre of large-scale poverty and attendant political tensions, we are gradually, with perhaps inadvertent gusto towards the poles of Western, specially American-dominated cultural commercialism and market economics. This runs the

double risk of aggravating the cultural alienation that is already a big problem in most Arab countries, while promoting economic growth that is of questionable durability and equity.

We seek foreign investments and business interaction with Israelis as important elements in our economic well-being and salvation. It seems to me that we over-emphasise the importance of foreign investments (perhaps because we value the political vote of confidence that comes along with foreign money?). The rush to offer ourselves to foreign parties as an attractive investment and business partner should be preceded by a far more diligent effort to correct those distortions that plague us at home.

"The impact of further economic liberalisation and open foreign investments on the Jordanian poor, without an effective domestic policy that targets poverty alleviation as a top priority, is likely to be negative and immense, given the experience of many others around the world."

This brings up the issue of the quality of our state-owned information media which the new information minister — a learned man of letters — has rightly said needs reassessment. The great unknown, however, is in which direction our media will move, given that the state-owned Jordanian television service is already in the process of disseminating CNN, BBC, and assorted foreign music and entertainment channels. I find it odd that our national television service should be facilitating access to alternatives to its own output, instead of improving Jordan Television to the point where it can credibly compete for its own domestic audience.

Why does this strangeness happen in an otherwise intelligent, impressive country like Jordan? The answer, I believe, lies in the imbalanced interaction between the forces of our identity and the attractions of the Western consumer bazaar. No doubt, it's a lot more fun for young Jordanians to watch rock and roll band or an NBA slam dunk contest than to sit through an interview with an agriculture ministry extension agent in a distant Jordanian province recounting his office's services to farmers. It may

also be more profitable or simply easier for those who dominate the local commercial power structure to act as salesmen and commission agents for Western entertainment media, than to make the effort required to bring Jordanian output up to Western standards of technical excellence and intellectual credibility.

My fear is that continued Westernisation of our commercial marketplace, without unlocking the forces of creativity and hard work that are within us, will merely perpetuate the trends that have brought us to the point today where we have to run after foreign assistance and investment in order to expect better future. The Mexico experience looks large in this respect; it should make us cautious about embracing foreign investments as the main cure to our economic weaknesses. The cost that Mexicans have paid for their foreign investments, in terms of poverty and helplessness, are enormous. They will now be compounded by the effective desovereignisation of Mexican oil, which will be in the hands of Mexico's international creditors as collateral for the \$30 billion rescue package. Poverty rises, the currency collapses, and sovereignty dissipates ever to

slight in Mexico today.

The impact of further economic liberalisation and open foreign investments on the Jordanian poor, without an effective domestic policy that targets poverty alleviation as a top priority, is likely to be negative and immense, given the experience of many others around the world. Mexico is the latest, most important lesson for us, given that the international lending agencies during the past decade have trumpeted Mexico as an example of successful economic adjustment. If I am not mistaken, some of our own officials were mentioning the Mexican precedent a few years ago as perhaps applicable to Jordan, in terms of debt rescheduling. It is rather troubling, but not coincidental, to note today that the two places in the world where people speak seriously of erecting fences to separate communities are along the Mexican-U.S. border and along the Palestine-Israel border — at the moment when we in Jordan view the U.S. and Israel as important business investment partners in the immediate future. We need to ponder the meaning of such fences, and why it is that we seek to be warmed by the economic fires of the fence-builders of our planet.

This suggests to me that we should value caution and prudence, and forego haste. Economic liberalisation, foreign investment and cooperation with Israel are all goals that I support and that I have spoken for over many years. These goals remain valid, but they are not sacred; in order to be constructive for Jordanians in an equitable and sustainable manner, they should be approached in a manner that draws far more on the ideas, sentiments and concerns of ordinary Jordanians.

The interplay between healthy economic growth and greater political participation is widely confirmed through studies and experiences in all parts of the world. We would appear odd if we thought that we in Jordan were somehow exempt from the laws of nature and the cumulative experience of humankind — perhaps not quite as odd as an Arab child wearing a Burger King crown and dancing for dollars, but pretty close. Hey, Charlie, I'll have one Double Whopper with cheese and a small order of onion rings, an extra portion of sovereignty on the side, and please hold the servitude.

Franco-Algerian ties in crisis

By Paul Taylor
Reuter

PARIS — Relations between Algeria and France, its former colonial power, have been plunged into crisis over President Francois Mitterrand's suggestion of a European-sponsored peace conference for the North African state.

Algeria's military rulers, waging a brutal war against Muslim fundamentalist insurgents, recalled their ambassador from Paris on Saturday and summoned the French envoy, while the official Algerian media lambasted Mr. Mitterrand for "interference".

State radio accused Mr. Mitterrand, who was interior minister in 1950s French governments that tried to eradicate Algerian nationalism, of "visceral hatred of independent Algeria."

President Liamine Zeroual's policy "will be the rock on which Mitterrand's attempt will be smashed," the radio said.

The inventive compounded a crisis of confidence between Paris and Algiers opened by the Christmas eve hijacking of an Air France plane by Islamic gunmen at Algiers airport that left bitter feelings on both sides.

The French, convinced Algerian leaders were lying to them, threatened to cut off financial aid to force them to let the plane fly to Marseille, where French commandos stormed it and freed the hostages.

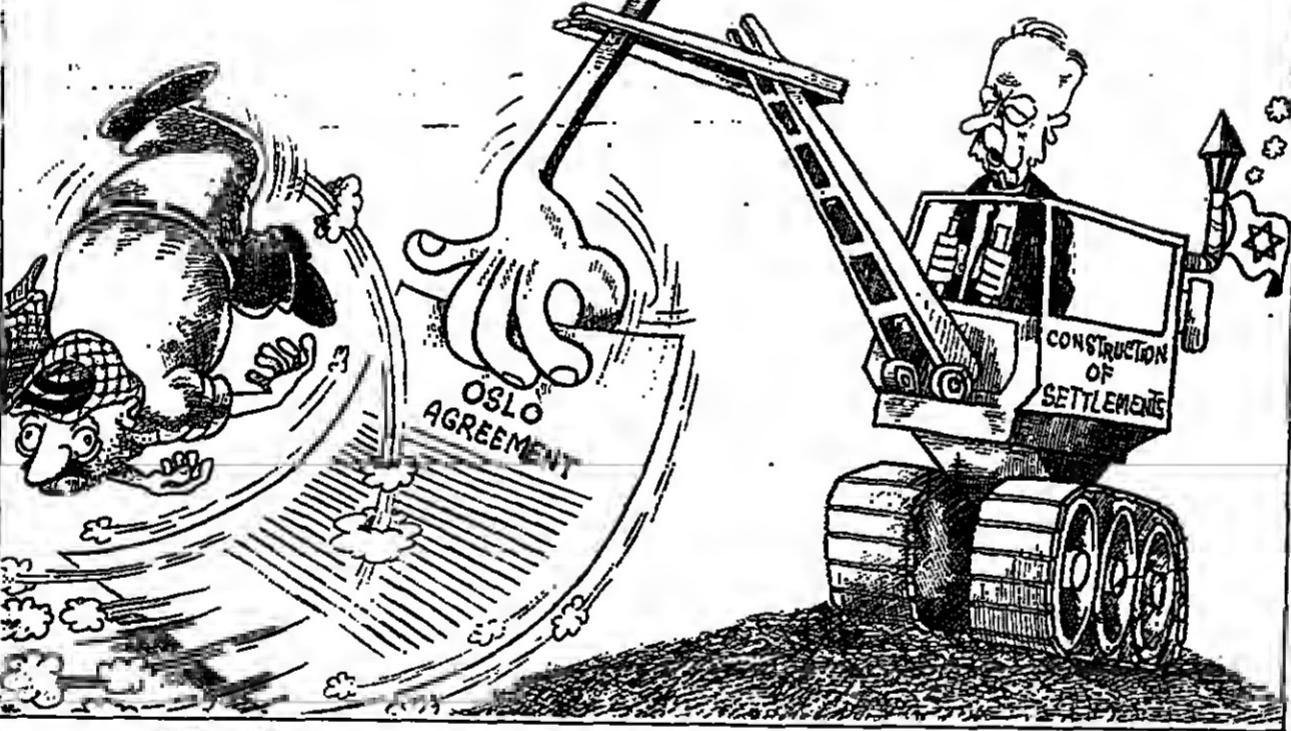
France then suspended air and sea passenger services to Algiers until security was improved.

Officials said Mr. Mitterrand, who retires in May, overstepped government policy when he voiced "a hope, not yet a policy" that the European Union (EU) could hold a conference based partly on a platform for a ceasefire and democratic elections adopted by Algeria's secular and Islamic opposition parties last month.

The French foreign ministry took the unusual step of saying it had no comment whatsoever on Mr. Mitterrand's suggestion, and an official called it "not a plan, a speech."

Foreign Minister Alain

M. KAHLIL



Rabin government unwilling to pay the price for peace

Only the U.S. can stop settlement activity

By Michael Jansen

THE RECENT decision by the Israeli cabinet committee on settlements to permit the immediate completion of 800 housing units for settlers at the Maale Adumim colony east of Jerusalem and of another 1,000 units over the next two years demonstrated in no uncertain terms that the Rabin government was not prepared to pay the price in land for peace with the Palestinians. And it showed that this committee, which includes two notable "doves," Shulamit Aloni and Amnon Rubinstein (who apparently took a seat slated for Shimon Peres), is no more in a position to impose control than the Minister of Housing. Be-

njamin Ben Eliezer, criticised for permitting building to go on without restriction.

Indeed, the very fact that Mrs. Aloni and Professor Rubinstein serve on this committee and have agreed to this decision demonstrates that they and the entire "peace lobby" in Israel has been swamped by the instant public opinion gains the right-wing made from the bomb explosion at Natanya. Both Meretz parties because they now find themselves in the pre-election period for the 1996 election.

The committee's decision would seem to contradict the statement made recently by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that Maale Adumim, Betar, the Etzion Bloc and Givat Ze'ev should not be considered a part of the "Greater Jerusalem" area. By giving into settlers' demands for continued construction in Maale Adumim, the committee has signified that these blocks have been placed in the same category as the areas in and around East Jerusalem, annexed by Israel as part of its "eternal, undivided and unshared capital in 1967.

Recently, "freedom of settlement," like the Israeli army, has become sacrosanct; perhaps even a majority of Israelis now support the rightist contention that "Jews must be free to settle anywhere in the land of Israel," the portion of Palestine captured in 1967 as well as the Israel "proper" of 1948.

Although this was a slogan raised by the Likud and

belt of fenced territory and round Jerusalem, sealing it off from the Palestinian population of the occupied West Bank and Gaza and preventing Arab East Jerusalem from ever becoming the capital of a Palestinian state.

Although the Palestine National Authority has protested these Israeli activities, there is little the Palestinians can do to stop the Israelis from going ahead. Only the U.S., as Israel's paymaster at the rate of \$6.37 billion a year, would be in a position to compel Mr. Rabin to exercise some restraint. However, according to an informed interpretation of the pledge Mr. Rabin made in 1992 to Washington (the Bush administration), Israel is permitted to expand without restraint its holdings within the Israeli-defined and administered "borders" of "Greater Jerusalem" and in the Jordan Valley. Furthermore, there are no obstacles to an annual "natural growth" of 1-2,000 units in the rest of the West Bank, nor the Israeli expropriations for "security purposes," particularly of "state lands" which account for about 60 per cent of the West Bank and 40 per cent of Gaza.

The prime minister now faces the awkward choice of whether to back Mr. Mitterrand's idea or try to ignore it.

Feature

Censorship no longer easy to spot

By Ed McCullough
The Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — Censorship in Latin America used to be easy to spot.

Military regimes of the 1960s, 70s and early 1980s simply took over or shut down newspapers and broadcast stations they considered offensive. Some used censors to mean coverage.

In the worst cases, reporters were slain. They were rarely brought to justice.

With the emergence of democratic governments almost everywhere in the region, media freedom has leaped forward. Latin American newspapers are more vigorously investigating government officials for corruption and other wrongdoing.

The best-known cases relate to the impeachments of presidents Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil and Carlos Andres Perez in Venezuela.

Government interference, however, has not disappeared. Censorship — just the threat of it — is just more subtle.

In Venezuela, congress passed a law in December that requires reporters to join the national press guild or face jail. Under the press law, reporters must also have a university degree.

Lawmakers in Colombia recently approved legislation ordering T.V. stations to give prominent time to opposing points of view on face heavy fines.

Congressmen pushed for the law because they said T.V. stations were making unsubstantiated allegations. Lawmakers were being accused of corruption and bribe-taking, but no proof was presented.

President Carlos Menem of Argentina has endorsed a bill in the senate that carries steep penalties. He said the law is needed to protect the good name of people unjustly accused of crimes.

Publishers claim the real aim is to suffocate investigative reporting that in recent years has included accusations of corruption against members of the government and his Peronist Party.

Despite the opposition of news groups, many reporters endorse or see no harm in laws requiring them to have university degrees and belong to a guild. They say it is useful to improve the status of journalists, who tend to be poorly paid and trained.

Some newspapers in Caracas pay reporters the equivalent of a few hundred dollars a month. That's why so many are so young and why those with any experience leave for jobs in other fields, said Gregorio Salazar, president of the National Union of Press Workers.

Editors, writers and academics disagree.

"In the United States of France, you don't have to be a journalism graduate to belong to a guild," they say. It is useful to improve the status of journalists, who tend to be poorly paid and trained.

Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia have similar laws. Censorship can take subtle forms.

In Mexico last November, the pro-government union that has a legal monopoly on sidewalk sales of newspapers boycotted Reforma, hampering its distribution.

The ostensible issue was whether the paper could go to press on a legal holiday. Journalists suggested the real issue was Reforma's independent editorial voice.

President Alberto Fujimori of Peru boasts that the press is free in his country. But critics say publishing is parcelled out mostly to pro-government media.

More ominously, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists says 13 Peruvian reporters are in jail for alleged violating an anti-terrorism law. Reporters were slain last year in Mexico, Brazil and Colombia.

Still, many people feel progress towards freedom of the press has been marked.

Features

By Ram G. Kishan

of fences

It's simply easier for those who have a central power structure to recruit agents for Western interests than the effort required to meet Western standards of technical credibility.

The cost of Westernisation of our country is unlocking the forces of creativity within us, will merely perpetuate us to the point today where we are. The Mexican experience in some ways should make us cautious about investments as the main cure to our problems. They will now be compensated by Mexico's international credit, oil rescue package. Poverty and sovereignty dissipates even.

economic liberalisation and open the Jordanian poor, without targets poverty alleviation to be negative and imminent. Others around the world, Mexico's lesson for us, given the example of successful economic pre-conditions a few years ago, but not coincidental, to see in the world where people go to separate communities at border and along the Plateau. When we in Jordan view business investment potential, we need to ponder the meaning that we seek to be warmed by the torch-builders of our planet. That we should value culture as a basic. Economic liberalisation cooperation with Israel are all we have spoken for over many years, but they are not sacred; in Jordanians in an equitable way should be approached in more of the ideas, sentiments to implement.

In healthy economic growth, it is widely confirmed during parts of the world. We see that we in Jordan were some of nature and the climate — perhaps not quite as odd as King Juan and daughter Mary, where I'll have a chance and a small order of government on the side, a

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Censorship no longer easy to spot

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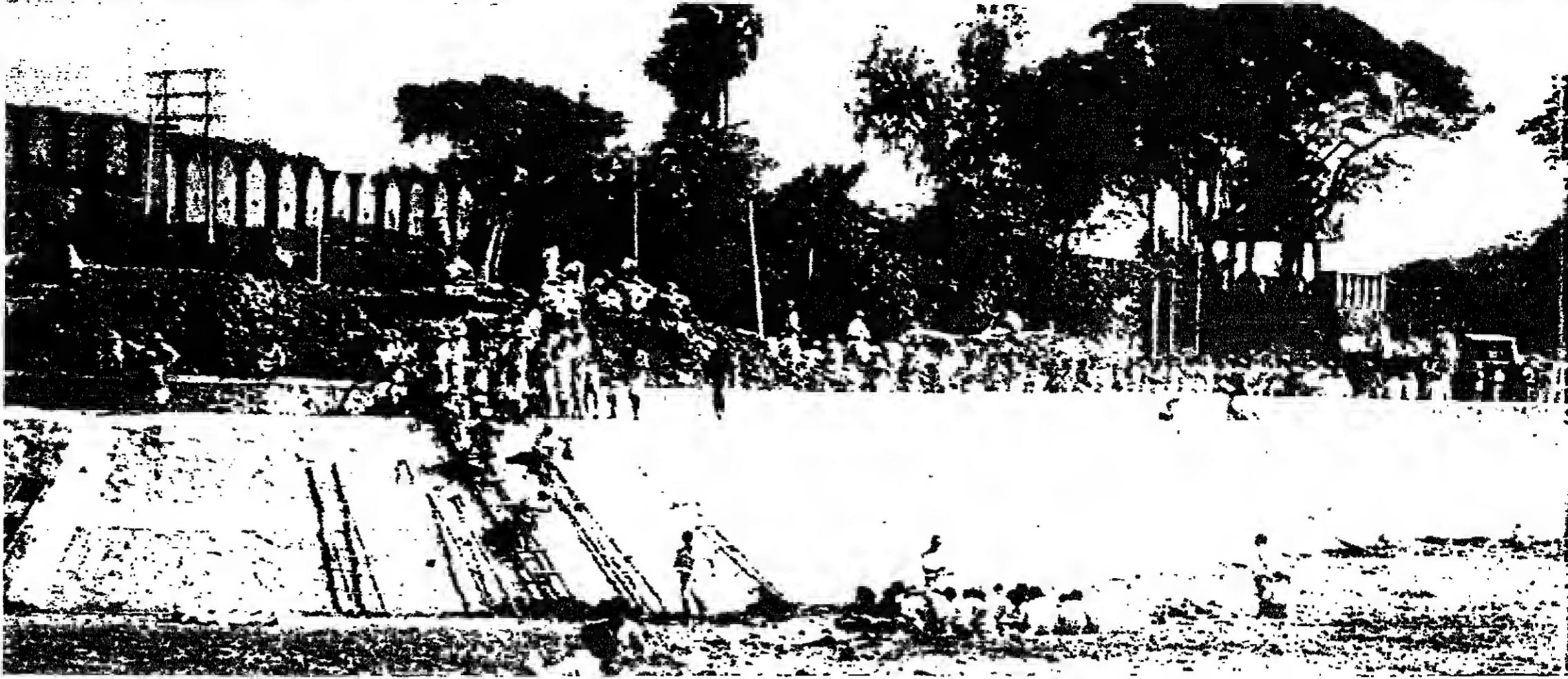
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Prisoners and press-ganged villagers working in slave conditions in Mandalay

In bondage on the road to Mandalay

Vivien Morgan reports on the Burmese government's use of slave labour to prepare for a tourist bonanza

UNDER THE midday sun a small group of Burmese labour by the roadside, cleaning gutters and rebuilding embankments. To tourists on their way to the Sagaray pagoda in minibuses with tinted windows, they do not merit a second glance. But these men are working at gunpoint. A soldier stands guard over them.

But the infrastructure is run-down; the roads unsuitable for tourist coaches, the railways slow and unreliable — you can wait at Rangoon for two days before the train leaves for Mandalay — and the archaeological sites and beauty spots, not up to accommodating mass tourism.

So the generals have turned the country into one huge slave labour camp. The rich can buy their way or pay for someone else to do the work. For the rest, there is no escape.

One of the largest projects is the fort at Mandalay — the fabled city of Kings. The red fort and its pagodas, the

gilded royal barge moored in the moat, Mandalay Hill, with its sacred temples and steep path of 1,200 steps leading to Nirvana — all evoke the past grandeur of what is now called the Golden Land.

Today, the fort and moat swarm with hundreds of prisoners and villagers, repairing walls and dredging mud. They are watched by armed soldiers, unpaid and fed only by a midday meal of rice. In scenes reminiscent of a

biblical Hollywood epic, they labour from dawn to dusk.

The prisoners no longer wear leg-irons (though they still do in parts of the country off the tourist map). They are marched to a nearby barracks at night. Villagers squat in makeshift camps by the fort.

Every month a village must deliver a certain number of men and women to work for two weeks. As one man said: "When the order comes, we have to go. If we don't, the police come the next day and

you're fined. If you can't pay the fine you can go to jail for about two months."

More than half a million people are being pressed into work on the Ye-Tavoy railway — dubbed the "Second Death Railway" because conditions resemble those on the line across the River Kwai built by World War II prisoners.

At Pagan, 300 km from Mandalay, the picture is the same.

The heart of Pagan, the old village, was recently demolished. Deemed an eyesore to tourists, and too close to the main temples, the inhabitants were moved to wasteland 3 kilometres away.

These same villagers are forced to work at archaeological site restorations for no

wages.

Pagan, renowned for its Buddhist pagodas, was designated by UNESCO as an area of historic importance. While international agencies pour in money for restoration, workers' wages are being withheld — and aid diverted to government coffers.

About 300,000 refugees have reached the Thai border. Living in camps on the Moei river, their numbers grow daily.

When tourists arrive in increasing numbers in the so-called Golden Land of Myanmar, the authorities hope they won't see — beyond the pagodas and serene smiling Buddhas — the real face of Burma.

The Independent

S. Africa police in crisis over racism and protests

By David Tucker
Reuters

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa's hard-pressed police service is in crisis, with white officers accused of racism being hounded from their posts and blacks marching for rapid change in their angry ranks.

The African National Congress (ANC)-led government has declared the eradication of soaring violent crime one of its top goals but low police morale and the crisis is clearly making this increasingly difficult.

In the past week police

man have battled policeman in Soweto, armed black police have held hostage a senior white officer and others have expelled a fearful white major from his station.

The nationally televised image of armed, uniformed policemen doing the shambling toy-toy march, a left-over from the anti-apartheid campaign, has

dismayed South Africans more used to their police putting down protest than taking part in it.

Douglas Gibson, safety and security spokesman for the Liberal Democratic Party echoed the thoughts of many recently.

How were people supposed to feel safe when law-enforcers were themselves breaking the law, he said in statement.

Mr. Fivaz, who says racism cannot be tolerated but neither can indiscipline, said police should not toy-toy either.

"It is not acceptable for police officers to strike as we have seen in the past week, to toy-toy in public with their weapons," Mr. Fivaz told reporters.

"The discipline and

morale problem is serious. The majority of SAPS (South African Police Service) members are disiplined but we want to see the question of morale looked at," he said.

The commissioner has promised swift change. Appointed by President Nelson Mandela to transform the police from the force of old into a service accountable to all and to shake it free from its apartheid and militaristic past, Mr. Fivaz at 49 is the country's youngest commissioner.

He does not want to be referred to by his general's rank and in a major break with the past, does not wear uniform.

A white police major told Reuters he understood the frustrations and grievances of those in the lower ranks and said what was happening was reverse racism.

"Black policemen want white policemen out of certain areas... to me that is racism. There is a big move

to change attitudes, but they are causing a lot of inter-racial pressure," said the officer, who asked not to be identified.

He said whatever public goodwill the police still had was rapidly eroding.

"There are grievance procedures, but these guys refuse to use them... I could do with a pay rise, to be paid for overtime, but you don't see me running down the street shouting political slogans with my belly hanging out of my shirt," he said.

The hardline police and prison civil rights union (POPCRU), whose members have been involved in all the current disputes, has threatened more trouble if Mr. Mandela's ruling African National Congress fails to deliver on its pre-election promises.

The ANC's Communist Party allies accuse the high-banded intransigence in dealing with the troubles and in their attitude towards grievances of ordinary police officers.

Referring to last week's Soweto mutiny in which riot

police shot dead a striking policeman, the South African Communist Party (SACP) said the police au-

thorities had to bear full responsibility for the consequences of putting down a labour dispute with gunfire.

An independent inquiry has been opened into the incident, but the clash and the use of the mostly white

er again be allowed to happen?

"It is not our task to apportion blame for this sad state of affairs but, as we have stated, the new SAPS must make a complete and decisive break with the past."

Israeli guard killed in Gaza

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinians since autonomy was launched last May.

Zvi Haenel, leader of the 4,000 Jewish settlers in Gaza, on Jan. 22, killing 21 Israelis. The two suicide bombers came from the Gaza Strip.

In response, Israel sealed the West Bank and Gaza, barring tens of thousands of Palestinian workers from their jobs. On Sunday, Israel's cabinet lifted some restrictions, but the bulk of the labourers still cannot reach Israel.

A dozen militants of the hardline Islamic Jihad have been arrested in the last two days, Palestinian police said, taking to more than 20 the total held in a crackdown since the Netanya blast.

Negotiations between Israel and the PLO on extending Palestinian autonomy across the West Bank, which have been frozen since the Netanya suicide bombing, were to resume in Cairo on Tuesday.

"We are sure that Tues-

day's talks and the meeting Thursday between Arafat and Rabin will lead to nothing" on the issue of an Israeli redeployment from the West Bank, said a PLO official, asking not to be named.

"The Rabin government gave us Gaza and that's all we can get at the moment. Now its aim is solely to stall to maintain the status quo until the next Israeli elections" in 1996, he charged.

The Palestinian Authority has arrested two Gaza policemen wanted by Israel for the murder of a Jewish settler, their friends said Monday.

Israel demanded the extradition of cousins Rajah and Amr Abu Sita last September.

They were members of the Hawks, armed wing of the Fatah movement, when they shot dead Israeli Uri Megiddo at Gan Or settlement on March 8, 1993.

The Abu Sita cousins became policemen like many of

their fellow guerrillas as autonomy was launched in Gaza and Jericho last May.

The pair, members of the Palestinian intelligence service, were arrested at their home in Khan Yunes at dawn Saturday and taken to Gaza City's central jail where they remained, friends said.

Gaza police refused to comment on the report.

Israeli police said Monday army veterans with all-terrain vehicles will start patrolling along Israel's frontier at night to keep out Palestinian infiltrators from the West Bank.

"The idea is to use a new kind of vehicle, a new method," said Shlomo Aharonishi, commander of the central police district.

The 15-member unit of volunteers began organising before Israel sealed the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Jan. 22.

In the wake of the Jan. 22 bombing, Mr. Rabin called for greater separation between Israel and the Palesti-

Mastermind pleads guilty

(Continued from page 1)

Tritz said. "But at whose bidding were these terrible acts performed?"

Until Monday, the government's case against the accused plotters rested heavily on the testimony of a former Egyptian army officer who infiltrated Sheikh Abdul Rahman's inner circle and secretly taped his conversations with the defendants.

But the informant, Emad Salem, surprised prosecutors soon after arrests were made 19 months ago when he revealed he had secretly recorded his FBI handlers and had passed along information to the Egyptian government.

The government paid Mr. Salem \$1 million for his help — a figure that a prosecutor admitted in his opening statement that his client was entrapped. "Mr. Siddig Ali did engage in conduct which all of you will find terribly offensive." Mr.

The indictment also accuses the defendants of involvement in the November 1990 murder of radical Rabbi Meir Kahane in New York.

Arab Inter-Arab trade remains low despite incentives

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Trade among Arab countries has remained a fraction of their total commercial exchanges despite incentives offered by a regional fund created three years ago to support flagging internal trade.

Official figures obtained showed exports within the 22-member Arab League stood at around \$12.88 billion in 1993, representing nearly nine per cent of total exports, which amounted to \$142.3 billion.

Internal imports reached \$11.1 billion, accounting for

around 8.7 per cent of the total imports of nearly \$126.6 billion dollars in 1993, according to the figures compiled by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF).

Internal exports were even down from \$14.5 billion in 1990, despite the creation of the Arab Trade Financing Programme (ATFP) in that year.

ATFP, set up by the AMF with a capital of \$500 million, has provided more than \$250 million in credits for trade deals among Arab nations since it was established.

The figures showed demand was lagging far behind the fund's financing capacity of \$1 billion a year.

"It seems political rifts are still affecting trade among Arab countries. This is one of the main reasons for the low demand," a Gulf official said.

ATFP finances only home-produced goods, with the aim of encouraging Arab exporters and reviving the ailing economies of some Arab League members. Oil is not included.

ATFP has also been involved in setting up a database linking all Arab markets

to provide information on prices and products for importers and exporters.

Officials have acknowledged that the programme is not enough to tackle the problem of low inter-Arab trade.

They blame political differences, high customs tariffs, the poor infrastructure of some members and the problems of bureaucracy, communications and storage.

AMF officials said boosting trade among Arab nations was essential to achieve economic integration and ultimately a common market.

Trade has remained low even within regional groupings, despite measures to remove customs barriers and ease travel for individuals.

In the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), internal exports of \$7.3 billion in 1993 accounted for only 7.1 per cent of their total exports of around \$102 billion. Internal imports stood at only \$5.1 billion, compared with a total of around \$67 billion.

The problem also affects North Africa's Maghreb Union, which groups Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Mauritania.

Exports among them were estimated at \$819 million compared with total exports of nearly \$30 billion. Internal imports stood at around \$860 million compared with a total of newly \$29 billion.

In contrast, the European Union accounted for 28.8 per cent of total Arab exports and 41.1 per cent of Arab imports.

Japan, the second commercial partner of Arab states, accounted for 16.6 per cent of their exports and 9.3 per cent of their imports, according to official figures.

Iraq will be short of revenue even after oil embargo — experts

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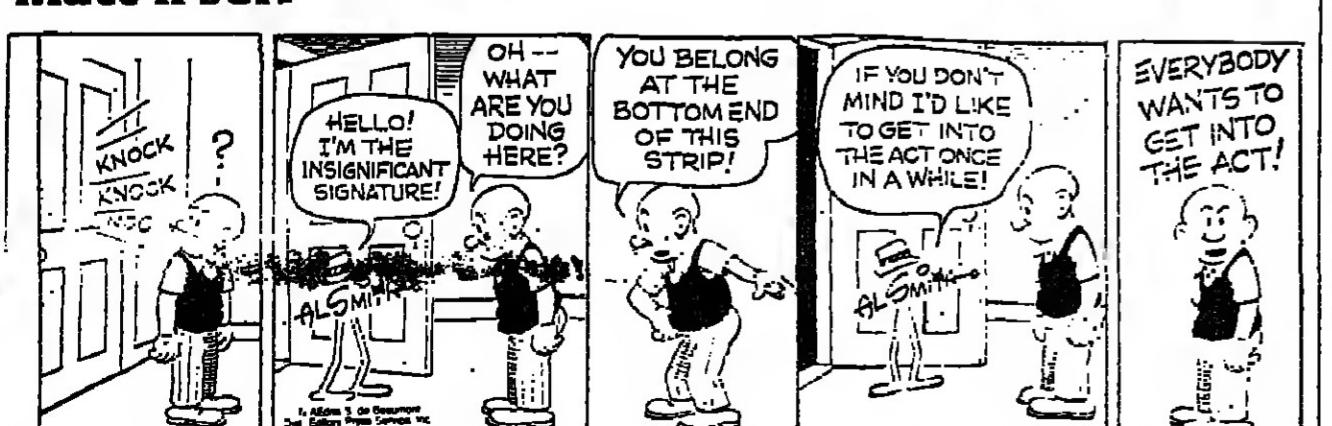
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UAE boosts spending on services to face demand

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a main OPEC oil producer, is expected to spend more on services in 1995 to meet rising demand due to a growth in the population and the industrial sector.

The 1995 federal budget, unveiled last week after a one-month delay, projected total allocations for services at around 6.68 billion dirhams (\$1.82 billion) compared with 6.48 billion dirhams (\$1.76 billion) last year, according to budget details from the finance and industry ministry.

The expenditure covered mainly salaries, maintenance and expansion for the education, health, water and electricity, social affairs and housing sectors.

The increase has forced the federal government to raise total 1995 spending by nearly two per cent despite a stated policy of rationalising expenditure because of a sharp decline in oil prices over the past decade.

The 1995 budget was projected at 17.94 billion dirhams (\$4.88 billion) com-

pared with 17.6 billion dirhams (\$4.79 billion).

"This year's budget will be slightly higher than the 1994 budget due to increased spending on growing services and other development needs," Minister of State for Finance and Industry Ahmad Al Tayar said last week.

A breakdown showed the education ministry was the main beneficiary, with allocations of around 2.92 billion dirhams (\$795 million) in 1995. Allocations for health stood at 1.31 billion dirhams (\$356 million) and for labour and social affairs at 672 million dirhams (\$183.1 million).

The rest benefited the public works and housing, agriculture, communication, information and culture and sports and youth.

In contrast, allocations for development projects stood at only 965 million dirhams (\$26.9 million), nearly six per cent of the total spending.

The figure covers only 54.7 million dirhams (\$14.9 million) for new projects as the rest were allocated for completing existing projects.

"Federal allocations for development projects have sharply declined over the past decade because the bulk of the infrastructure has been completed," a UAE bank manager told FP. "But outside the federal sphere, allocations for projects by some emirates are still relatively high."

Abu Dhabi is the biggest and wealthiest emirate in the UAE as it produces nearly 80 per cent of the country's total oil output of around 2.16 million barrels per day.

Officials said the increase in development needs was caused by a steady growth in the population, which rose from around 2.08 million in 1993 to 2.23 million in 1994.

The planning ministry projects it at 2.4 million in 1995.

The industrial sector has also steadily grown due to a government drive to diversify its oil-reliant economy.

Groth stood at around 11 per cent in 1994 and 9.2 per cent in 1993.

The agricultural sector grew by 9.6 per cent in 1994 and the construction industry by nearly 8.1 per cent, according to official figures.

Lebanon's growth slows in 1994 — central bank

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's economic growth slowed in 1994 despite a healthy balance of payments surplus of more than \$1 billion, it said.

Money supply growth also dropped to 25 per cent as the authorities tightened controls and fought inflation, the central bank said Monday.

The Bank of Lebanon said an indicator it introduced last year to measure economic activity in the absence of reliable official statistics was seven points higher in December than a year earlier.

"Although some problems were evident in some sectors in 1994, the economy continued to expand but at a slower pace than in 1993," the bank said in its monthly report for December.

On the plus side, net foreign exchange reserves nearly doubled to \$2.7 billion in 1994 and the country registered its second successive

balance of payments surplus of more than \$1 billion, it said.

Money supply growth also dropped to 25 per cent as the authorities tightened controls and fought inflation, the central bank added.

Its economic indicator showed that activity slowed slightly in December for the second straight month, registering 142.6 compared with 142.9 in November.

Lebanon has had no official economic statistics by which to measure growth since the 1975-90 civil war.

The bank's coincident indicator of economic activity, which takes January 1993 as 100, peaked at 152 in October.

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South African Davis Cup number one Wayne Ferreira returns the ball against Australian Patrick Rafter at the Westridge tennis stadium in Durban on Monday (AFP photo)

Davis Cup

Sweden stages amazing comeback

LONDON (AP) — Defending champion Sweden, one of only two countries in the history of the Davis Cup World Group to win a match after being down 0-2, did it again Sunday as Stefan Edberg and Jonas Bjorkman led a 3-2 victory over Denmark.

Bjorkman, playing in place of the ill Magnus Larsson, nearly blew a 4-0 lead in the fifth set before beating Frederick Fetterlein 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 6-7 (5-7), 6-3, 6-4 to clinch the contest.

Earlier, world No. 9 Edberg had tied the score at 2-2 with a 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7-3) victory over Kenneth Carlsen.

"If I had lost both games against the Danes, I just wouldn't have survived," said Edberg, who lost to Fetterlein on Friday.

It was only the fourth time that a team has come from 0-2 down to win a World Group match since its introduction as the top level for Davis Cup play in 1981.

And three of the four times it was an Edberg-led Swedish team that pulled it off.

The Swedes did it against Canada in the first round in 1992, and again against the United States in last year's semifinals. Mexico also came back from 0-2 against Switzerland in a relegation round match in 1988.

Bjorkman, ranked 47th on the ATP tour, was called into service when the 16th-ranked Larsson pulled out with an upset stomach. After Bjorkman and Edberg lost their singles matches Friday, Bjorkman and Jan Apell won the doubles Saturday to set up the thrilling finish.

Fetterlein, ranked No. 125, rallied to end Bjorkman's lead to 3-4 in the final set before dropping the final game on the indoor carpet at Copenhagen.

"I was very close to making it in the final set, but he (Bjorkman) was the best," said Fetterlein.

Elsewhere in the World Group, six matches were decided by a 4-1 score: Russia over Belgium, Netherlands over Switzerland, Austria over Spain, Italy over the

Czech Republic, Germany over Croatia, and United States over France.

Austria took a 2-1 lead over South Africa in a delayed contest.

Austria 4, Spain 1: On hard court at Vienna, Thomas Muster overpowered world No. 4 Sergi Bruguera 6-4, 7-5, 6-3 to give Austria a winning 3-1 lead before Alexander Antonitsch put away Carlos Costa 6-3, 6-4.

Bruguera called it "the best match that Thomas has ever played against me."

"I don't know why the Davis Cup brings out the best in me," said Muster.

Italy 4, Czech Republic 1:

The matches on the clay at Naples were virtually the only sports event in Italy not canceled on Sunday. The nation called off virtually everything else after a fan was killed at a soccer game last weekend.

Italy advanced when Andrei Gaudenzi defeated Salva Dosedel 6-3, 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 in the first of the reverse singles. Renzo Furlan completed the contest by beating Czech Daniel Vacek 3-6, 7-6, (8-6), 6-2.

United States 3, France 1:

At St. Petersburg, Florida, saying he was just happy to make up his "embarrassing" performance on Friday when he lost in straight sets to Cedric Pioline. Todd Martin served 20 aces to beat Guy Forget 6-3, 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-5), 6-2 and clinch the American victory.

Forget's third loss in as many days. Jim Courier finished off the win with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Cedric Pioline.

Russia 4, Belgium 1: On clay at Antwerp, Johan Van Herck gave Belgium its only victory of the weekend, beating Yevgeny Kafelnikov 6-7 (2-7), 6-3, 6-1. Andrei Chesnokov earned the final point for Russia, which held an insurmountable 3-0 lead after Saturday's doubles with a 6-7 (5-7), 6-2, 7-6 (7-2) victory over Kris Goossens.

Netherlands 4, Switzerland 1: On clay at Geneva, Richard Krajicek routed

Swiss debutant Lorenzo Manta 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 to clinch the Dutch victory, and Jan Siemerink followed up by winning 6-4, 6-3 over Patrick Mohr.

Switzerland's fate was all but sealed Friday when 15th-ranked Marc Rosset, leading his opening singles match against Jacco Eltingh, retired from the match with a broken foot. He'll be out for up to three months.

The 236th-ranked Manta replaced Rosset in both the doubles and the reverse singles, and Switzerland lost both matches.

Germany 4, Croatia 1: On hard court at Karlsruhe, Germany's Michael Stich won his third match of the weekend, 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-4), over Sasa Hirzon. Stich also won his singles match Friday and played doubles Saturday.

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Germany 4, Croatia 1: On hard

Shaquille leads Magic over Knicks

ORLANDO (AP) — It was a game the New York Knicks were looking forward to.

It was a chance to show Orlando exactly who the defending conference champions were, a chance to prove to the Magic that reputations are not made in the first three months of the season.

But when it came time to play their best ball of the season — in overtime, at Orlando arena — the Knicks came up with a big zero.

New York shot 0-for-10 from the field in overtime and lost to Orlando 103-100 Sunday.

"There was an anxiousness on our part once we got back and tied it," said Knicks coach Pat Riley. "Then it's about focus and about patience and execution. We did not have to push the throttle down."

Shaquille O'Neal won another personal duel with Patrick Ewing, scoring 41 points and grabbing 15 rebounds to Ewing's 38 and 13.

Nick Anderson had 15 points, Anfernee Hardaway 13 and Dennis Scott 12.

In other games, Houston beat Phoenix 124-100, Seattle beat Miami 136-109, Chicago beat Golden State 97-93, Charlotte beat Washington 111-105 and Boston beat Minnesota 115-82.

In the Orlando-New York game, Dennis Scott broke a 98-98 tie with a 3-pointer, and Anfernee Hardaway made a pair of free throws with 11.1 seconds remaining as the Magic outscored New York 5-2 in the extra period.

Ewing, who bit a 3-pointer late in regulation and a clutch baseline jumper to send the game into overtime, missed another 3-point attempt with two seconds left in the extra period.

John Starks scored 21 points for New York, which never led. Derek Harper added 20 points.

Rockets 124, Suns 100: At Phoenix, Hakim Olajuwon had 28 points, 11 rebounds and three blocks and Sam Cassell and Vernon Maxwell were a combined 9-for-14 from 3-point range as the Rockets showed the form that made the NBA champions last season.

"I thought the real Houston Rockets showed up for this game," Maxwell said. "It was just a great game for us. We got the post play out of Hakim, and the guys on the outside were knocking down the 3s."

Houston became only the third team to defeat Phoenix at home this season and the first to beat the Suns twice.

"They shot 12-of-24 from 3-point land," said Charles Barkley, who had 24 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists. "There isn't much you can really do about that. They shoot 12-for-24, they're going to beat us every time. We've got to make a decision what to do about that monster in the middle."

Sonics 136, Heat 109:

At Miami, the Sonics notched their 10th straight road win and their 14th win in 16

games overall.

Seven Seattle players scored in double figures, led by Shawn Kemp with 26 points and 11 rebounds. Kendall Gill had 21 points and Detlef Schrempf and Gary Payton added 18 apiece.

The Sonics hit four 3-pointers in the first period and six of their first eight to blow the game open early.

"That's the best we've seen a team play against us all year," Miami coach Loughrey said. "It's the best team I've seen this year."

Bulls 97, Warriors 93: At Oakland, California, Scottie Pippen scored 35 points and Chicago won despite blowing an early 24-point lead.

The Bulls were up 95-88 with 1:48 to play and still never lost. Tom Gugliotta made a 3-pointer and Tim Hardaway hit two free throws after Pippen fouled out, cutting the deficit to 95-93 with 50.5 seconds to play.

After B.J. Armstrong came up short on a 15-footer, the Warriors had a chance to tie, but Keith Jennings missed a layup with 20 seconds to go. Armstrong was fouled and hit two free throws to end the scoring.

Time Hardaway led the Warriors with 28 points. Ganting scored 23 points in 27 minutes before being ejected with 9:09 to play.

Hornets 111, Bullets 105:

At Charlotte, North Carolina, Robert Parish hit two free throws and Dell Curry sank a long jumper in the final 38 seconds to extend Charlotte's winning streak to six games.

Alonzo Mourning got 26 points and 10 rebounds for Charlotte. Carr, Larry Johnson and Scott Burrell added 16 apiece.

Celtics 115, Timberwolves 82: At Boston, Dee Brown scored 16 of his 23 points in the second quarter when Boston pulled away.

Brown and Eric Montross scored Boston's first 20 points of the period and the Celtics turned a four-point lead into a 55-31 advantage with 4:08 left in the half. Boston never trailed by fewer than 18 after that.

Isiah Rider led Minnesota with 18 points but was just 7-for-23 from the field.

RESULTS

Orlando 103, New York 100, OT.
Seattle 136, Miami 109
Charlotte 111, Washington 105
Houston 124, Phoenix 100
Boston 115, Minnesota 82
Chicago 97, Golden State 93

Ferrari unveil F1 challenger

MARANELLO, Italy (AP) — Ferrari on Monday unveiled its needle-nosed challenger for the 1995 Formula One World Championship with which, said Ferrari President Luca Di Montezemolo, "we must really come back and win."

The famous team has not won the Championship since 1979.

Built "rigorously" to the new 1995 aerodynamic and engine rules, the 412 T2 was unveiled without key aerodynamic elements "to give other teams the least possible time to study our ideas," said British chief designer John Barnard.

It features a new V 12.3 litre engine, 10 kilos lighter than the previous 3.5 litre unit, but Ferrari are also working on a V 10 engine. Team Director Jean Todt said that the engine would be run first towards the end of April and road-tested in mid-season.

Barnard said he had designed the 412 T2 to accept the V10 with little modification, but he felt it would be "unrealistic" to expect to race it this year.

Italian ski star Alberto Tomba joined drivers Gerhard Berger and Jean Alesi, and test driver Nicola Larini, for the formal presentation, and Montezemolo asked Tomba to touch the car "to instill your winning spirit."

over San Diego a week earlier, helped stake the NFC to a 10-0 lead in the first quarter, won the Pro Bowl for the third time in five years.

The NFC defense gave up just 309 yards of offense to the NFC, only 41 yards rushing.

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| PHILADELPHIA | PLAZA | CONCORD | AMMOUN THEATRE | Nabil & Hisham's AHLAN THEATRE | |
| Yusra, Mahmoud Hamedieh in <i>The Immigrant</i> Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 | Bruce Willis...in <i>DIE HARD II</i> Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 8:30, 10:30 | CONCORD '1' Shows: 12:30, 2:45, 6:30, 8:15, 10:30 | SUM'A in the satirical play <i>HI CITIZEN</i> Composed and directed by Mohammad Al Shawqat Daily from 8:30 p.m. Children's Play | Presents Abu Awwad in the social comedy Punctured Bag The Ninja Turtles Show Directed by Akram Abul Regheb Daily at 10:30 p.m. | Presents: AL SALAM YA SALAM at 8:30 p.m. For reservation, please call 625155 |
| | | ROBOCOP '3' Sylvester Stallone — Sharon Stone in <i>The Specialist</i> Shows: 2:45, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 | | The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day | The theatre is closed on Saturdays & Sundays</ |

Sports

Figure skating championships end with money in the future

DORTMUND (AP) — A the end of a European Figure Skating Championships week in top talent, the sport's governing body is considering using money to keep the best skaters at its competitions.

Surya Bonaly of France took her fifth European title in the absence of Olympic champion Oksana Baiul, who skipped to the pro ranks. The Ukrainian is still uncertain about applying for reinstatement to the ISU after turning pro soon after her victory in Lillehammer.

"Prize money is part of the game today," Ottavio Cinquanta, the president of the ISU, said Sunday. "I can't understand, with so much money to the ISU such as the TV rights (why) we can't give some money back to the skaters."

The International Skating Union said Sunday that it will consider giving cash prizes in future championships in an effort to keep the top skaters from turning pro early.

Cinquanta said that the next ISU council meeting in Birmingham, England, during the world championships next month, will be looking into various prize proposals. Then they will be recommended for acceptance at the ISU Congress in 1996.

"A market is a market. If an ineligible skater has better conditions than we will have to work out things to give more motivation to stay with us," Cinquanta said.

Cinquanta said that it was fine for skaters to perform in exhibitions or shown, that if they are involved in a competition, it must be according to ISU rules and judges in order for the competitor to stay eligible.

"We have to control our sport," Cinquanta said. "The thing we have to offer is the title and that is what the pros have going in."

The title at the European Championships were split among four countries with a 17-year-old Russian, Ilya Kulik, taking the men's title. Kulik was asked if he intended to leave the sport early if he should win a world title, like Baiul.

"It's difficult to say," Kulik said. "Life is full of surprises. But my plans are to participate."



Finnish ice dancers Susanna Rahkamo and partner Petri Kokko perform the European Figure Skating Championships (AFP photo)

part in the Olympics... not only in the coming one, but beyond that," the 1992 Olympics are in Nagano, Japan.

Baum was wavering over whether to go to the pro ranks earlier this season. But a deal arranged between the French Skating Federation and a French Television Network gives her a million francs a year (\$190,000) for staying eligible through the next Olympics.

They probably would not have won the European title last week if Olympia and world champions Oksana Gritschuk and Evgeny Platov of Russia had not been sidelined because of Platov's knee injury.

The absence of pros was never more evident than in the pairs. Germans Mandy Woetzel and Ingo Steuer were champions but could not compare with the departed Yekaterina Gordeeva and Sergei Grinkov, who took the Olympic gold medal last year, then went pro.

The skaters who were reinstated last year, such as Katarina Witt and Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean, have returned to the pro ranks.

Italy pays respect to victim of fan violence

ROME (AP) — Italians headed to soccer stadiums as usual Sunday. But this time, the gates were locked.

No crisp passes, no diving saves, no controversial referee calls.

And no fan clashes.

The decision to ban professional sports on Sunday after a fatal stabbing in Genoa last week forced Italians to try other activities and reflect on the violence.

Some carried flowers and others simply strolled past stadium gates on the nation's first game-day without soccer in half century.

Olympic stadium — scheduled site of a match between third-place As Roma and Internazionale of Milan — instead hosted an impromptu parking-lot game between children.

Two spectators, Roma fans, chatted nearby. One, a season-ticket holder, said he could think of nowhere else to go on a Sunday.

Giovanni Altobelli, walking his dog along the arena's perimeter, took note of the

silence. "It's all very calm today," he said.

Inside, prowling cats replaced spectators and birds chirps filled silence normally drowned with the rabid cheers of "ultras," Italian equivalents of British soccer hooligans.

A policeman leaped against his kiosk at the stadium entrance, smoking a cigarette rather than undertaking his usual job: controlling unruly fans.

He said thinks the one-day ban is proper "out of respect for the loss of a young life," but quickly added that violence will return when the fans do — "in another seven days."

Italian authorities called off Sunday's soccer league matches and other professional sports events in response to the Jan. 29 death of a fan before the Geona-AC Milan game. A 19-year-old Milan supporter was charged with the slaying, which touched off demands to crack down on violent fans.

The change in activity was

obvious throughout the capital on Sunday.

Cafe patrons drank to music, not the widely-followed play-by-play radio broadcasts. There was not the familiar site of men hunched to hear their transistor radios — the only way to follow the afternoon matches in Italy because they are not televised.

Television stations showed movies rather than the regular soccer talk shows. Newspapers published guides to activities for people caught without their accustomed 90 minutes of soccer.

Elsewhere, about 1,000 people attended a memorial mass in Cosenza for Vincenzo Spagnolo, the stabbing victim. The service began at 2:30 p.m. to coincide with scheduled game starts.

Outside the Genoa stadium where Spagnolo was killed, an estimated 3,000 people — including hundreds of "ultras" donning team scarves — visited a makeshift memorial dotted with flowers, flags and handwritten



A lone soccer supporter stands in front of the closed and empty Milan "San Siro" Stadium at the first Sunday without championship matches in Italy as national mourning takes place for the young supporter, killed last Sunday (AFP photo)

signs.

In a town outside Florence, people gathered to protest stadium violence.

Some even pretended there were games.

The *Corriere Dello Sport* newspaper published "updated" first-division standings based on phone-in polls of fan predictions of what game results would have been had they been played.

The paper's Sunday supplement carried a full-page headline echoing the words of Spagnolo's father: "One should not die for a game."

"It's really a tragedy what happened in Genoa," said Carlo Morelli, a Rome shop owner. "Today is for thinking about what sports should be about, bringing people together."

Aircraft carrier unusual entry in America's Cup

SAN DIEGO (AP) — So you thought sailing was a genteel sport?

How would you like to look up and see a 94,000-ton (85,000 metric ton) nuclear-powered aircraft carrier emerging from dense fog smack in front of you?

That's what happened Saturday during America's Cup racing off Point Loma.

The navy isn't quite sure how the USS Abraham Lincoln wound up so close to the 75-foot (23 meter) elite racing boats — two were racing and two more were lining up to race — but America's Cup officials were miffed by the whole experience.

"How she wandered in there I don't know," race director Pat Healy said. "We were anchored there for an hour. It wasn't as though we were hiding in the bushes."

"They've got instruments on there that can see a body in the water and I don't know why they didn't see us," he said.

Commander Mike Thurwanger, a Navy spokesman, said the ship may have been travelling closer to the shore because of the dense fog, but he said it was doing everything right given the poor visibility — traveling slowly, using additional radar and extra lookouts. The ship was on its way to naval air station north island.

If the race was not going to, it would have been a very appropriate place for her to be, he said. "I don't believe she was aimlessly drifting around looking for a hole in the fog."

Still, the ship's crew apparently did not realize the ship had entered the course until after its forward lookout peered down and saw a yellow race buoy.

The ship then came to a halt about 200 yards (180 metres) from the starting line, in the middle of the race.

Young America rallied during the last leg Sunday to defeat Stars and Stripes on the America's Cup Defender course, ending a five-race victory streak for Dennis Conner's boat.

Young America had fallen behind by more than two minutes because of a tangled sail, but caught Conner's dark blue boat on the home stretch.

It is always nice to come back," said Yoog America skipper Kevin Mahaney.

After a strong start in the competition, Young America has struggled lately. Sunday's

course, and after 1 (hours of manoeuvring, passed through the area. Thurwanger said none of the racing yachts or spectator boats were in danger.

The Lincoln had apparently been made aware of the general area in which the races were taking place, but may not have been apprised of the exact latitude and longitude of the race course, he said.

"We believe there may have been some more accurate information provided through other sources," he said. "That's what we're investigating, if the Lincoln had that on board."

At the time of the intrusion by the thousand-foot ship, two boats were already on the 18.55-mile (30 km) course, and OneAustralia and Japan's Nippoo Challenge were beginning their pre-start manoeuvres in the second race.

"It was pretty scary at first and then we realised they were able to stop," said Peter Gilmore, sailing coach for the Japanese syndicate Nippon Challenge. "Still, it's incredible that they could make such an error."

Young America beats Stars and Stripes

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windward mark to head down wind in her race

win snapped a three-race losing streak.

The match with Stars and Stripes started well for Mahaney's boat. In patchy 5 to 6 knots of breeze, Stars and Stripes headed left and Young America sailed right, with a two-second edge at the second mark.

Up the first leg, Young America seemed to find the better wind on its side of the course and cleared out to a 1 minute, 56 second lead at the top mark.

It was very light and shifty," said Mahaney. "We were seeing huge differences in velocity, with two breezes hitting each other. And I think we had a little speed edge on Dennis."

But trouble struck for the syndicate from Bangor, Maine, at the end of the first run. During a down wind tack, or gybe, its sail twisted into an hourglass shape. As the sail was dropped to clear the tangle, a halyard twisted around the mast causing more problems. Young America continued on with a party set sail.

Under full sail, Stars and Stripes took advantage of the mess on board its rival and moved into the passing lane to lead by 29 seconds at the second mark. Conner's boat stretched its lead to more than two minutes over the next two legs.

In the light conditions, Young America fought back and on the final upwind Leg Mahaney had closed the gap to 23 seconds.

Much of it was the shifting wind, being in the right place at the right time," Mahaney said.

To the surprise of Stars and Stripes, Yoog America moved ahead and clinched a comfortable lead, and crossed the finish line 1 minute, 46 seconds in front.

Young America's Bowman Kevin Bowman (centre) against Rioja de Espana during the America's Cup Challengers race off the coast of San Diego (AFP photo)

"It's not a big deal, but it's not the world's most pleasant thing," said Stars and Stripes co-skipper Paul Cayard about giving up the lead on the last leg. "But it is a four-month-long regatta and worse things than that are going to happen to the winner."

On the Louis Voitton Challenger Course; John Bertrand's OneAustralia retired from its match against Japan's Nippon Challenge after a spreader bar, which holds the steel lines supporting the mast, snapped.

"It went off like a canon," said skipper Bertrand.

Nippon was awarded the two points for the victory by completing the 18.55-mile (30 km) long course.

Sterilization Breakthrough from Johnson & Johnson

The introduction of the new STERRAD Plasma Sterilization System, a technological breakthrough from Advanced Sterilization Products, a division of Johnson & Johnson Inc., represents a quantum leap in medical sterilization methods both here in the Middle East and worldwide.

The new system combines a degree of safety, speed and ease of operation not previously seen in sterilization technology.

Already having received U.S. FDA clearance, the system is now already operational in many of the largest hospitals in the USA and is also approved and used across Canada, Australia, Japan, Germany and many other European and Eastern countries. Although the STERRAD Plasma Sterilization System will not be officially launched in the GCC until April, in January 1995, systems are now available for immediate installation in any hospital in the Middle East and a system is already up and running in the Dubai Hospital.

The new STERRAD Plasma

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANIAH HIRSH
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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♦K6 ♦KJ10 ♣98732 ♣43
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♦ Pass 1♦ Pass
1♦ Pass ?
What action do you take?

Q.2—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♦76 ♦83 ♣A8764 ♣Q942
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♦ 1♦ Pass ?
What action do you take?

Q.3—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♦76 ♦KJ14 ♣A855 ♣A103
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♦ 1♦ Pass ?
What action do you take?

Q.4—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♦QJ72 ♦84 ♣K76 ♣AQ105
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♦ Pass 1♦ 2♦ ?
What action do you take?

Q.5—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♦AQ84 ♦75 ♣A852 ♣743
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♦ Pass 2♦ Pass ?
What action do you take?

Q.6—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♦AQ84 ♦75 ♣A855 ♣A103
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♦ 1♦ Pass ?
What action do you take?

Q.7—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♦74 ♦KJ14 ♣A855 ♣A103
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♦ 1♦ Pass ?
What action do you take?



The crew of Young America prepares to set a spinnaker while turning the windward mark to head downwind in her race against Stars and Stripes during the America's Cup Challengers (AFP photo)

Brown: Violence blocks investments

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown said Monday that continued Mideast violence was a major obstacle to private investment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"Investors want a certain comfort level," Mr. Brown told reporters. "They want to know that their investments are safe ... and that kind of assurance must come from people in the region."

U.S. officials travelling with Mr. Brown said that since autonomy began last May, only one private U.S.-Palestinian venture was formed, a factory making building materials in the Gaza Strip.

The U.S. government offers private investors loan guarantees and political risk insurance as incentives, the officials said.

Mr. Brown, accompanied by American business executives, arrived in Israel Sunday on the first leg of a week-long Middle East tour promoting U.S. trade and investment in the region. On his agenda are meetings with Israeli and Palestinian business and political leaders.

Mr. Brown also tempered his initial criticism of Israel's closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The closure, imposed after a Jan. 22 suicide bombing, has tens of thousands of Palestinian labourers from reaching jobs in Israel.

Mr. Brown said Sunday that the restrictions were "devastating economically" for the Palestinians.

Asked to comment further on the issue Monday, he said: "I certainly understand the security needs of the closure."

"The unfortunate thing is that many people are punished for terrorist acts that are just absolutely unacceptable and must be dealt with," Mr. Brown said.

Mr. Brown will meet Tuesday with Palestine Liberation

Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat in Gaza to discuss investment projects in the West Bank and Gaza.

Later this week, Mr. Brown will attend a regional trade summit with Jordanian, Israeli, Egyptian and Palestinian officials in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba.

Mr. Brown called the meeting "historic" and looked forward to greater cooperation, removing trade barriers and enhancing the role of the private sector in the Middle East.

His trip, which began in Cairo on Sunday, also takes in the West Bank, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

"To build lasting peace and stability we must ensure the region has a strong economic foundation," he said.

Israel and the United States issued a joint communique during Mr. Brown's visit declaring 1995 the "year of U.S.-Israeli free trade" to be marked by a series of joint ventures and encouragement for bilateral trade and investment.

On Jan. 1, duty was lifted on all goods covered in the 1985 U.S.-Israel free trade agreement.

Mr. Brown sealed a cooperation accord with Energy Minister Gonen Segev allowing U.S. power companies to enter the Israeli market, officials said.

American companies would be able to take a share of up to a fifth of the country's electricity needs, 900 megawatts.

Two U.S. companies, Mid-Atlantic and Global, have proposed projects which would generate from 150 to 200 megawatts.

Shaath warns U.S.

Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath on Sunday warned a congressional initiative to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem could destroy peace negotiations with Israel.



A Chechen fighter with a Kalashnikov sits in the office of the Chechen state security department of Ochikay. Martan as some children watch him through the window. Ochikay.

Martan is one of the centres of Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev's forces that is being encircled by Russian troops (AFP photo)

Russians continue raids; refugees flee Grozny

ALKHAN-YURT, Russia (AP) — Russian warplanes pelted this town southwest of Grozny with bombs Monday, and more refugees streamed out of Chechnya as widespread fighting continued in the Grozny area.

Chechen fighters said the Russians had resumed bombing oil and chemical factories in and around the shattered capital. They saw the tactic as a sign of Russian frustration at still having failed to seize Grozny.

"It means they're losing hope of taking Grozny," said Nal'and Kitayev, a chief in the Chechen special forces, standing at a crossroads about 10 kilometres from Grozny. "Otherwise, they've saved the factories for themselves."

As Mr. Kitayev spoke, a Russian plane roared unseen overhead and delivered a bomb strike through thick clouds on the centre of Alkhanyurt, about three kilometres away. Minutes later, another bomber followed suit.

Chechens at the crossroads did not even flinch at the air raid, hardened by nearly two months of war in their homeland. It was not immediately clear whether the bombs had caused serious damage or casualties.

Khaki-clad Chechen fighters emerging from Grozny said their forces were tightened.

The experts said some contaminated barrels were emptied and sold for use in pickling, soap-making and other uses they felt could be harmful to one's health.

The barrels were imported from Italy in 1987 and 1988, according to Greenpeace and the army intelligence report. Thousands of barrels have since been returned to Italy because of public pressure.

Meanwhile, Prosecutor General Munif Oweidat reversed a 1988 pardon on the dumping of chemical waste and decided to investigate later this week.

The Lebanese Forces commander Samir Geagea and top lieutenant Fuad Malek are in jail, standing trial for bombing that the prosecution charged was an attempt to discredit the government and reignite the civil war.

Mr. Geagea is also on trial for the 1990 assassination of a rival Christian politician.

Mr. Geagea, who flirted with Israel during the civil war, has denied any involvement in the church bombing and the assassination, saying he was being victimised because of his opposition to Lebanon's current Syrian-backed regime.

The Greenpeace disclosure came amid a public outcry demanding information about what happened to the thousands of barrels of chemicals believed dumped on land or off the coast during the war.

The crisis has shaken the cohesion of Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri's government.

Former Druze warlord Walid Jumblatt, now minister of refugees, has called for the dismissal and trial of Environment Minister Samir Moqbel.

Mr. Moqbel has denied any wrongdoing.

Greenpeace estimates

ing a circle around a force of about 70 Russian tanks and other armoured vehicles in the southern suburb of Prigorodnoye, where they said a big battle was under way.

Scattered fighting also was reported inside the city, south of the Sunzha River, as the Russians tried to establish control.

The clashes were driving more and more refugees out of secessionist Chechnya, bound mostly for neighbouring Ingushetia in mud-caked buses, packed cars and can-覆盖面 trucks.

Marina Bersanova, carrying three bags and shepherding her two small children ahead of her, said the overnight bombing on her area west of Grozny finally persuaded her to leave.

"The planes were flying literally right over our houses," said Ms. Bersanova, 30, as she arrived in the Ingush capital, Nazran. "The children were crying. They were very afraid. It is impossible to live there any longer."

An official in Ingushetia said Sunday that his republic's population has swelled by half by the Chechen outflow, and the situation fast becoming critical.

Some refugees have gone on to neighbouring north Ossetia, Dagestan or elsewhere.

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Soon there may be a deficit of food, beds and medicine here," he said. "Sunday, if the refugees stay until summer, there may also be an epidemic. These are not reasonable living conditions."

The estimated 50,000 people remaining in Grozny are living without water, heat, medicine or any safe way to get food, said Jean-Louis Lacaze, the director of operations for Doctors Without Borders in Chechnya.

where in Russia. But most stay in tiny Ingushetia, crammed into emergency housing or squeezed into private homes and putting tremendous stress on the already battered economy.

About 10,000 people have been arriving from Chechnya every week since Russian troops invaded the territory on Dec. 11 to support its claim to independence.

The Ingush share a common language, culture and the Muslim faith with the Chechens but are paying a high price for their hospitality.

There are now more than 140,000 refugees, the majority of them from Chechnya, a region of 260,000 permanent residents.

Nazir Doskiyev, head of the Ingush immigration office, called it a "very bad situation."

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